



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations


Graduate School

2024

Department Chairs' Impact on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Their Departments

Nicholas R. Garcia II
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), [Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons](#), [Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Work, Economy and Organizations Commons](#)

© The Author

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/7696>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

**Department Chairs' Impact on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Their
Departments**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

By

Nicholas Raymond Garcia II
Bachelor of Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011
Master of Public Administration, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013

Director: Charol Shakeshaft, Ph.D., Professor, School of Education

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA
March 13, 2024

© Nicholas R. Garcia II 2024

All Rights Reserved

Dedication

To my mom, dad, and sister, thank you for everything.

To my family and friends. Your support has been immeasurable I am lucky to have each of you in my life. You are the threads that weave the fabric of my story. You will be happy to know that I can no longer use 'homework' as an excuse not to hang out.

To anyone wanting to make the world a better place for others, I am grateful for you.

Acknowledgments

This would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and friendship of Dr. Charol Shakeshaft. In October 2019, seemingly out of the blue, you sent a short email to check in on me when I needed it the most. That email helped jumpstart my dissertation journey. Thank you for everything you have done. You have taught me so much about life, persistence, and kindness. I will be forever grateful for the skills, academic or otherwise, you have given me. I am a better person because of them.

Dr. Denzine, Dr. Huff, and Dr. Siegel-Hawley have played a significant role in getting me to this point. You all are the educators I aspire to be. Dr. Denzine, I am thankful you shared your experience and expertise related to all things higher education. It was invaluable to this project and my career. Dr. Huff, I appreciate your dedication to allowing students the freedom to be creative. You helped me find my voice. Dr. Siegel-Hawley, you taught my very first class in the Ph.D. program and inspired me to seek justice in the world. You motivated me not only to see this project through but in every day as well.

To the chairs and faculty who participated in this study, thank you for sharing your stories with me.

To my colleagues and fellow students at VCU, you have been my mentors and encouragers, but mostly, my friends. Thank you sincerely. I hope to reciprocate all you have given me back to you and others.

Abstract

Department Chairs' Impact on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Their Departments

By Nicholas R. Garcia II, MPA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2024

Director: Charol Shakeshaft, Ph.D., Professor, School of Education

Department chairs serve not only as the leaders of their departments but also as middle managers in their schools, colleges, and universities. While many department chairs see their role as having little authority, they still play an integral role in day-to-day campus operations (Hunt & Jones, 2015). As leaders of their departments, chairs can directly influence the department's organizational culture (Schein, 2010), including the culture of diversity and inclusiveness. Departments nationwide are being held responsible for increasing the diversity of the faculty and responding to students' calls for diversity. Departmental organizational culture and the role of the chairperson are essential factors that can help us learn more about how to successfully recruit and retain diverse faculty in a competitive hiring landscape (Kelly et al., 2017). The findings of this study suggest that department chairs can successfully shift the racial makeup of their department, specifically through their ability to change culture and promote diversity.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
The Study.....	6
Department Chairs.....	7
What Do Department Chairs Do, and How Does this Relate to Creating an Equitable, Inclusive Climate and Faculty?	8
Department Chair Decision-Making	9
Department Chair Background, Leadership Style, Perspective, and Preparedness ..	10
Department Chair Background	11
Department Background.....	11
Department Chair Preparedness	13
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Department Culture	13
Purpose of this Study	16
Research Questions.....	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	17
Extended Search	19
The Department Chair's Role.....	20
Explicit and Implicit Duties	24
Decision Making: Liberty and Discretion	28
Liberty.....	28
Discretion.....	31

Discretion in Public Administration	32
History of the Use of Bureaucratic Discretion	34
Department Chairs as Bureaucrats	36
Use of Discretion in Post-Traditional Governance	38
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Department Chair Role.....	43
Departmental Organizational Culture	45
Purpose.....	47
Research Questions.....	47
Chapter 3: Method	48
Results from Previous Study.....	48
Case Study Method.....	50
Site and Sample.....	51
Site	51
Sample	52
Methodological Approach.....	55
Data Collection.....	57
Pre-Interview Survey	57
Semi-structured interviews.....	59
Interview Protocol	59
Departmental Faculty Interviews	61
Interview Transcription and Analysis	62
Content Analysis	63
Considerations	64

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion	67
Survey Results.....	67
Training and Preparation for the Chair Role	67
Hiring	69
Department Size.....	69
Feelings About the Role	70
Department Websites.....	71
Chair Interviews	74
Research question 1: How did department chairs describe the scope of their ability to use discretion in their role?.....	75
Research question 2: How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?.....	82
Research question 3: How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for an inclusive department culture?	88
Research question 4: What challenges did department chairs encounter when working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?.....	96
Chair’s Discretion and Authority	100
Department Diversity Goals.....	102
Department Inclusion Goals	103
Challenges to Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Department.....	106
Summary of Faculty Interviews	107
Summary of Results.....	108
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	111

Research question 1: How did department chairs describe the scope of their ability to use discretion in their role?	111
Research question 2: How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?	112
Research question 3: How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for building and strengthening an inclusive department culture?.....	115
Research question 4: What challenges did department chairs encounter when working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?	116
Implications	117
Limitations and Future Improvements	122
Conclusion	123
References.....	125
Appendix A: Department Chair Consent Form	130
Appendix B: Faculty Consent Form.....	133
Appendix C: One-Page Overview	136
Appendix D: Chair Solicitation Email.....	137
Appendix E: Faculty Solicitation Email	138
Appendix F: Department Chair Pre-Interview Survey.....	139
Appendix G: Department Chair Interview Protocol.....	144
Appendix H: Departmental Faculty Interview Protocol	148

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Screenshot of @ChairMartyr Twitter account.....	5
Figure 2: A PRISMA flow chart.....	19
Table 1: Departments at VCU that Showed Exemplary URM Growth 2017-2022	54
Figure 3: Study Process.....	64
Table 2: Pre-Interview Survey Results.....	71
Table 3: VCU Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement Index.....	73
Table 4: Chairs' Roles in Hiring	80

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

In the fall of 2015, I began coursework for the Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in educational leadership, policy, and justice, my third degree from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), having previously earned a B.A. in Political Science in 2011 and an M.P.A. degree in 2013. That same semester, a group calling themselves “Black VCU Speaks” held a sit-in at the university president’s office seeking to address the lack of Black faculty members at the university that claimed to support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all (King, 2015). Reflecting on my previous degree programs, I realized that I was taught by only a handful of Black professors during my time at VCU, many of them adjuncts. In my Ph.D. classes, we were learning about the history of American education and, specifically, the racial inequity in schools, historically and now. While my studies explained the context, my student and professional life provided examples of racial injustice in higher education. Not only was I a student at VCU, but since 2012, I have also worked at VCU as an undergraduate academic advisor at the institution. This distinctive perspective of being a student, employee, and researcher meant that I was provided the opportunity to see how academic departments work from the inside.

In 2020, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that of the 1.5 million faculty at post-secondary colleges and universities, only seven percent were Black, whereas 74 percent were white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Just as Black VCU Speaks expressed dissatisfaction with the university’s progress toward diversifying its faculty, students at other colleges and universities across the

nation made similar demands (Libresco, 2015). The majority of the protests had this common goal. Still, the protestors also called for required diversity training and courses on racism and for their institutions to create campus cultural resources for students and faculty (Libresco, 2015). While students at predominantly white institutions were calling for these changes, college student bodies were becoming more diverse. Between 2000 and 2018, the percentage of Black students between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled at post-secondary institutions increased from 31% percent to 37% of Black students in that age group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). As college student body demographics change, colleges and universities owe it to their students to create a more representative faculty of the world around them. To accomplish this, colleges and universities cannot rely solely on strongly emphasizing recruiting underrepresented minority faculty. They must also do the work necessary to make their campuses and departments more hospitable to faculty from all backgrounds. Within a university, the department is the primary identifier for any faculty member, meaning that their department shapes much of life and work. This proposed research focuses on the cultural shifts that departments and their chairs have enacted to increase faculty racial diversity. This study aims to better understand department chairs' role in increasing their departments' diversity, equity, and inclusion. The study sought to accomplish this through interviews with current and former chairpeople whose faculty experienced an increase in racial diversity between 2017 and 2022.

Between 2016 and 2018, I worked as a “Building Inclusive Communities” training facilitator on my campus, in addition to my academic advising position. This training consisted of working with partners across campus to host training to boost inclusivity.

The other facilitators and I shared approaches, language, tips, and tools to help navigate conversations related to inclusivity. We regularly had a mixture of faculty, staff, and administrators attend the two-day training. During these two years, I gained insight into the complex issues the attendees brought to the sessions. Participants discussed feelings of loneliness and othering in their departments, making them feel less-than, unvalued, and excluded. We consistently heard of challenges to inclusivity from attendees. Through this experience, I began to understand how inclusive practices (or lack thereof) can impact departments and the individuals within them.

Having worked at this institution for the past decade, I have made genuine connections with faculty members. Due to the nature of my work, I mainly worked with my school's chairpeople on student concerns, course enrollment, course substitutions, etc. My school's department chairs are nominated by faculty, approved by the dean, and serve a three-year term. When I started my career, the school had six undergraduate departments, and over the years, I have interacted with fifteen different chairs. I respect these individuals as leaders for our faculty, students, and the school.

For a class project during the second semester (spring 2016) of the Ph.D. program, I chose to interview five department chairs to gain a better understanding of their position, how they prepared for it, their vision for their departments, and how the chair role might support diversity, equity, and inclusion. I learned that many participants had not sought out (and did not particularly desire) the role but instead felt it was "just their turn" to shoulder the burden. They shared that they did not have much power to make changes, did not feel like they had been given any meaningful training, and

thought that, ultimately, the role took time away from their research and teaching responsibilities.

This was a revelation to me, and I had more questions than answers after I finished the project. The more I learned in my courses and the more discussions I had with faculty and administrators at work, the more I realized the complexities of the role and how it could impact a career trajectory. I still saw the potential power in the chair position, and I began to wonder how that untapped power could be utilized, particularly how it could increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within higher education.

The apathy towards the leadership position expressed by some interviewees in these early discussions was startling. I had assumed that the chair position would be coveted, but that did not seem to be the case. These few conversations opened my eyes and caused me to seek additional information related to faculty affairs, the promotion and tenure process, and faculty development. As usual, Twitter's algorithm caught up to my searches and suggested I follow an account called "@ChairMartyr." Upon closer inspection of the account, I quickly realized that it was a parody account was posted from the perspective of a department chair suffering in their¹ administrative position. The account's profile picture was that of an actual office chair; the profile also had a background photo that was simply a piece of white paper with the word "HELP!" spelled out in all capital letters (see Figure 1). The account had nearly 4300 followers before it was closed in November 2022. The most interesting aspect of the account was in its bio section, which stated, "I remind my faculty daily that I never wanted to be chair" (Twitter, 2019).

¹ The use of "they" and "their" as a singular, non-gendered pronoun is used throughout the study whenever a person's gender is not relevant.

Figure 1

Screenshot of @ChairMartyr Twitter account



I quickly connected with the truth behind the parody after reading the short bio. Some department chairs are elected, placed, or selected into their roles, having little to no interest in the leadership aspect of the position. It was not just the department chairs at my university. This realization helped me recognize that in conceptualizing a study about chair leadership, it would be important to allow participants to openly discuss their experience of coming into the department chair role and whether they considered it a leadership position instead of a clerical/administrative one. Gaining a deeper understanding of the department chair's perspective toward the position would assist in better understanding their approach to the role. For instance, a department chair who feels it is "just my turn" to be chair might not be as engaged and may not see the need to expand the leadership role beyond what is specifically required. Contrarily, chairs who actively sought out the position may be more inclined to flex authority and make departmental changes to achieve their department and personal goals.

Through my experiences at my institution as a student and an employee, I began questioning how more could be done to create a diverse and inclusive environment. My own experiences and academic background in Public Administration and Educational Leadership have shaped my perspective on the problem. These fields gave me a unique lens to study inclusivity within the organizational hierarchy of colleges and universities, particularly around discretion in administrative roles. To further investigate how chairs utilize their administrative discretion to impact their department's culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion, I will draw on concepts from Public Administration, Educational Leadership, and the experiences of current and former department chairs. There is very little in the literature about how university department chairs act to increase diversity and inclusiveness in faculty representation. I utilize an exemplar case study methodology, allowing me to study departments and department chairs that have successfully increased their faculty's diversity.

The Study

Participants for the study were selected from a population of department chairs at a large, public, urban university, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). The university was chosen for convenience due to its proximity; however, its past two university-wide strategic plans included goals to increase faculty diversity. Data on departmental faculty diversity was obtained from the university's Office of Institutional Research and Decision Support and was used to identify departments that have shown growth in the number of underrepresented minority faculty members between 2017 and 2022.

Once department chairs agreed to participate in this study, they were asked to complete a brief survey collecting demographic information and personal history. Chairs were then interviewed about their experience as a department chair, including (a) their preparation for the role, (b) their use of discretion in the role, (c) the sociopolitical tensions that influenced their decision-making in the role, and (d) their own perceived ability to utilize their discretion to impact diversity, equity, and inclusion in their department. Interview questions were created based on previous literature related to the study and other sources, including chair information. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for patterns representing actions and strategies chairs used to create more inclusive environments. The demographic and personal history collected through the survey was utilized to provide additional context of the sample and how the participants' backgrounds influence how they changed the organizational culture to support the increased diversity.

Department Chairs

A department chair may not initially recognize their role in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, believing many of the problems faced in these areas are out of their hands and too large to make an impact, but it can be so much simpler. It can be as easy as being mindful of faculty meeting times during Ramadan, providing encouragement and mentorship to younger faculty members, or providing cultural competency training as part of a professional development plan. These small things can impact the department's culture, which could be used to increase diversity, equity, and sense of inclusion in the department (Schein, 2010). In these fine details, department chairs, acting as frontline administrators, can utilize their power to make an impact.

Even if a department chair only has enough authority to set faculty meeting dates and times, the chair can still use this modicum of leadership discretion to create a more inclusive culture within their department. But how far does that leadership discretion actually go? Department chair roles can vastly differ from unit to unit (Kruse, 2020). This can make it difficult to generalize about the authority of individual chairs. Some may have budgetary control, while others supervise staff members, other chairs may play a role in the promotion and tenure process, while other chairs' only responsibility might be to submit the course schedule each semester.

This study explores intentional decisions made by chairs within the scope of their position's authority that impacted the growth in diversity within their department. Gaining this knowledge helps department chairs better understand how their role is a part of the more extensive higher education bureaucracy and how they can help achieve a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive higher education system in the U.S.

What Do Department Chairs Do, and How Does this Relate to Creating an Equitable, Inclusive Climate and Faculty?

What do department chairs do? What don't they do? What can they do? What can they not do? The position description tends to vary from school to school or even department to department. For instance, the department chair's role over a large, well-funded, STEM, and research-oriented unit will look very different than a department chair who serves a smaller, less-funded humanities department (Kruse, 2020). While the chairs in these two units have similar titles, they may have very different jobs. The chair of the larger, well-funded department may have support staff, administrative assistants, or assistant chairs to help oversee the department. Whereas the chair in a

smaller unit may not be afforded the same support. This is important to note, as the study must recognize the variations across chair positions to fathom the extent of the chairperson's authority. Chairs with more formal authority (budget, supervision, faculty evaluations, etc.) may be able to make substantial organizational changes to promote diversity. Whereas chairs with less formal authority may rely more on informal methods to impact diversity and inclusion.

When considering a department chair's impact, it is also necessary to consider the chair's ability to effectively exercise the role. Because the role of the department chair is not universally defined, different chairs may enact a range of authorities and tasks. It comes down to whether the department chair has the option to make certain decisions and whether or not they have the ability and capacity to enact their plans.

Department Chair Decision-Making

Regardless of the amount of authority individual department chairs have, their decisions, by virtue of their leadership position, will have an impact on the organizational culture of their department (Kakabadse et al., 2009). Over time, these decisions contribute to significant shifts in organizational culture. Due to their position within the hierarchy of administrative positions in higher education, chairs act as the first and most frequent administrators with whom faculty interact. They are on the front line of administration. The field of Public Administration would call department chairs "street-level" administrators/bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010). Street-level refers to how and where interactions occur (e.g., 'on the street' as a part of everyday life). Public Administration explores the complexity of how these street-level administrators/bureaucrats' decision-making impacts policy outcomes. Even though these street-level positions might not be

at the level of making policies or prescribing the direction of the organization, these street-level administrators/bureaucrats create the living policy. In other words, they determine how policies and procedures are enacted, which may sometimes not be the same as written policies. At each interaction with the public, these street-level administrators/bureaucrats are enacting and shaping policy. Similarly, the decisions made by department chairs help shape the culture of their department and, in turn, the culture of higher education.

Even if these street-level administrators/bureaucrats only have a fraction of authority, their decisions will directly impact their constituent's lives. As individual administrators, their impact may be small. Still, when you consider the vast number of administrators in these positions, you can begin to recognize how their collective decisions can make a more considerable impact on the population (Lipsky, 2010). By viewing department chairs through the street-level administrator/bureaucrat lens, we can begin to recognize how their authority can be used to influence the field of higher education, particularly when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Department Chair Background, Leadership Style, Perspective, and Preparedness

In this study, I aim to find how department chairs (a) describe their background, (b) leadership style, (c) perspective, and (d) preparedness for the role, and (e) how these factors may have impacted the growth of underrepresented minority faculty members within the departments selected for the study. These components may influence the chairs' ability (and perceived ability) to make strategic decisions affecting the diversity and inclusion of the department. Factors considered include 1) chair background, 2) department background, and 3) training received.

Department Chair Background

Background on the individual department chairs can identify characteristics and commonalities that help chairs positively influence the diversity of their departments. This includes personal and professional history that may affect how the individual approaches the department chair role.

Tenure is an important concept to consider when studying the role of department chair. Tenure provides security in that a tenured faculty member serving as department chair will have confidence regarding job security and may be more willing to exercise authority to achieve their goals than a term or tenure track faculty member. Similarly, a department chair who has spent more time working in a role has more experience, giving them more confidence in their abilities or a better understanding of the boundaries within which they can work. Gender and race identification lend insights into how marginalized and non-marginalized department chairs differ in their ability to execute their authority. Another factor to consider would be the department chair's family background, including information about their first or multi-generation faculty status. In my previously discussed study, it became clear that several department chairs had family members (parents) who had worked in academia, and they reported asking their parents for advice when faced with a decision. This additional level of guidance and mentorship may give the department chair more administrative savvy and confidence to utilize administrative discretion.

Department Background

The department's background and history will help contextualize the environment in which the department chair operates. This information will include baseline data like

the department's size, number of faculty, number of adjuncts, and number of major students. However, it will also include additional information like existing departmental goals, strategic plans, participation in university initiatives, and other points related to departmental culture.

I also examine the department's internal structure: administrative and support staff, including faculty serving in administrative roles like assistant or associate chairs. These factors will help paint a broader picture of the amount of administrative support the chair has. Or perhaps the chair has no administrative support and, therefore, does not have the time or capacity to make decisions regarding diversity and inclusion effectively.

Another factor to consider is how the department chair entered the role. Whether the chair was elected, placed, or hired into the position can help establish the departmental framework within which they operate. These different paths to the role can impact how the department chair works. Elected chairs may feel more allegiance to departmental faculty, while chairs appointed by deans are perhaps more inclined to follow the dean's directives.

The level of faculty support within the department provides additional insight into how the department chair influences the organizational culture of diversity and inclusion. A collegial, calm, and supportive relationship between the faculty and department chair may help support a department chair's efforts. However, a less collegial relationship may prove more of a hindrance. On the flip side of the hierarchy, the relationship between a dean and department chair has similar effects. A supportive relationship between the dean and the department chair could provide additional support to the

chair's efforts instead of a more challenging relationship, which may yield more barriers for the chair. A good understanding of the chair's role and the dean's support will likely result in a more confident leader.

Department Chair Preparedness

I seek an understanding of department chairs' steps to prepare for their role. This includes any formal training required by their school, college, or university. The existence of any formal training is insightful, as it helps determine what the university, college, and/or school considers to be the function and scope of the chair role. In this way, the formalized training will set baseline expectations of the duties and authority of the department chair. However, I also look for any informal training opportunities department chairs take advantage of to understand the role better. These might be mentorship from a former department chair, elective professional development opportunities, or other leadership roles the chair may have taken on before the department chair role.

Collectively, the department chair's background, the department's background, and the department chair's preparedness for the role help establish the individual setting in which the department chair works. Awareness of these critical factors will help contextualize the department factors and the department chair's decisions that affected the growth of underrepresented minority faculty in the department.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Department Culture

In this study, I focus on diversity related to underrepresented minority (URM) faculty members within academic departments. I use the National Science Foundation's description of underrepresented minorities to include people born in the United States of

Black, Hispanic, Native American, or Native Alaskan background (National Science Foundation, 2017). The decision to use the underrepresented category was made due to the available data collected and received from the university where the study is taking place. Unfortunately, the term underrepresented minority does not fully encompass or acknowledge each group's differences and obstacles in higher education (O'Meara et al., 2020). Underrepresented minority tends to be the most common phrase currently used in the literature regarding faculty diversity, recruitment, and retention. The term may include additional populations based on the unique field, discipline, or department. For instance, the National Science Foundation also includes individuals with disabilities as underrepresented minorities in STEM fields (O'Meara et al., 2020).

Department chairs play a crucial role in determining how individuals within their departments interact with one another (Bystydzienski et al., 2016). The comfortability with which faculty members feel they can interact, communicate, and form connections reflects the department culture's inclusivity (Byztydzienski et al., 2016). Departments in which faculty do not interact with each other or one where they do not connect and form bonds would have a low level of collegiality. In comparison, a department culture emphasizing forming connections and developing relationships would have a high level of collegiality. Departments can have a high level of collegiality and still struggle with inclusion. Inclusivity relies on all faculty members feeling welcome, included, and appreciated for their perspective and as an individual. However, the perception of inclusion can differ from one faculty member to another. For instance, if a department faculty comprises seven men and one woman, the seven men may feel the department is inclusive from their perspective, but the woman may not. In addition to differing views

on inclusion that may exist, there are also varying types of inclusion. For instance, an underrepresented faculty member might feel socially included within the department. However, they may not feel academically included if their research area does not easily align with other faculty, making it difficult for them to form professional relationships. This is why chairs need to recognize their role in promoting collegiality and inclusion in the department.

Historically, higher education institutions and organizations have been dominated by white men (Byztydzienski et al., 2017). Due to the historical homogeneity of white male faculty, the organizational culture of higher education is based on that hegemonic group's values, behaviors, and expectations (Schein, 2010). Over time, these values, behaviors, and expectations became commonplace within the culture of higher education, creating an environment that is not conducive or inclusive to women and URM faculty (Byztydzienski et al., 2017). Edgar Schein's organizational culture and leadership theories state that leaders must make a top-down effort to create organizational change (Schein, 2010). Therefore, if we recognize department chairs as department leaders, they must understand their department's culture and implement changes as needed to create a more inclusive department culture. For department chairs to be effective agents of cultural change, they must first be able to recognize the issues with their department's culture. With proper training and understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices and a deep understanding of the existing culture within their unit, department chairs are then able to purposefully exercise their discretion to change their department culture to become more inclusive (Byztydzienski et al., 2016).

Purpose of this Study

This study explores the department chair's role in increasing their department's diversity and inclusiveness.

Research Questions

Four research questions guide this study. These questions guided the framework, literature review, and methodology.

1. How do department chairs describe the scope of their ability to use discretion in their role?
2. How do department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?
3. How do department chairs describe their goals and actions for an inclusive department culture?
4. What challenges do department chairs describe in working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I searched to find literature related to the topic of how department chairs influence their units and the respective stakeholders of those units through their decision-making and discretion. Two electronic databases, ProQuest and ERIC, were used to find articles related to the subject. Key phrases related to the topic were chosen and searched. The keywords in the search used were as follows: (“Management Development”) AND (“department chair” OR “department chairman” OR “department chairmen” OR “department chairperson” OR “department chairpersons” OR “department chairs”) OR “chair of the department”) AND (“discretion”). Management Development was added as a search term after initial results proved too broad. This additional term helped eliminate articles not germane to the research question by focusing on the management aspect of the department chair role. Seven different variations on “department chair” were used to ensure that differences in titles and the order of words would not limit the search. “Decision Making” and “Discretion” were included to narrow the search to articles that discuss department chair’s use of their authority. This initial search yielded 495 articles (151 from ProQuest and 344 from ERIC).

These results were subsequently reviewed and determined to either be eligible or ineligible for the study. Inclusion criteria included:

1. Articles must be peer-reviewed articles from scholarly journals.
2. Articles must have been published in the last ten years to ensure that the results reflect the current state of universities and schools in the United States.
3. Articles must be published in English.

Application of these first three inclusion criteria resulted in 234 articles (66 from ProQuest and 168 from ERIC). The following exclusion criteria were used to eliminate articles from the study that did not meet the subject matter needs of the study:

1. Articles related to K-12 school systems were excluded to ensure that all articles dealt with department chairs in higher education.

When the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, this resulted in 15 articles from ProQuest and thirty-two articles from ERIC, for a total of forty-seven articles whose titles and abstracts would be further reviewed for inclusion. To further determine which of the remaining forty-seven articles be included, abstracts were reviewed for two inclusion criteria:

- 1) the article must include job functions related to the role of department chair.
- 2) the article must reference the department chair's authority and/or discretion as a critical factor in the article.

This helped to ensure that each article chosen met the needs of the study. This review resulted in five studies for review (see Figure 2).

Figure 2**Extended Search**

While this initial literature review produced few sources, additional searches were conducted to expand the scope of the study. The term “discretion” was replaced by “agency,” “responsibility,” and “decision-making.” ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar

were used in these additional searches for relevant articles. Since there was limited literature linking discretion with the department chair role, I focused on collecting literature pertaining to the department chair role and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Forty-eight publications were selected for further investigation for inclusion in the study.

The literature on the chair role primarily came from educational researchers, as did many articles and studies related to diversity, equity, inclusion, faculty recruitment, and retention. Discretionary literature was found across public administration, business, and leadership. I looked closely at the public administration research, particularly the literature surrounding the idea of street-level bureaucrats. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the placement of department chairs in the university faculty hierarchy is similar to that of street-level bureaucrats (Frey, 2021). By applying this perspective, I can better understand the use and ramifications of discretion as it is used by faculty in low to mid-level manager positions. Given the lack of literature on how department chairs use discretion in their administrative role, this review will summarize these three areas related to the study.

The Department Chair's Role

Seemingly, there is no consensus on the department chair role (Kruse, 2020). With each university, college, and school having unique needs, the role mainly serves as a mid-level manager for an academic department, with individual positions and responsibilities being created out of unique departmental circumstances (Kruse, 2020). There are multiple ways in which a faculty member assumes the role of department chair (e.g., hired, elected, or appointed). These various avenues depend on the historical policies and procedures of the colleges and schools where faculty are housed.

Term lengths of department chairs can also vary greatly, with some serving for a set amount of time before reassuming their previous faculty role and others serving permanently (Kruse, 2020). Weaver et al. (2019) report that most chairs serve in the position for one to three years. Frey (2021) reports that chairs with service beyond six years would be an outlier.

Since department chair roles, responsibilities, and paths to chairpersonship vary from unit to unit, it can be difficult to generalize about the position. I was once told by a chair that they assumed the role simply because “it was my turn” to take on the administrative duties for the department. In contrast, another department chair saw the role as an opportunity to grow their administrative skills for future positions. Frey (2021) describes these two attitudes as a “call to duty” and “embracing a personal mission,” respectively. The former opts to take on the mantle due to a feeling of personal responsibility to their department and their colleagues, and the latter takes on the role to try to implement a specific change or advance their career trajectory (Frey, 2021). Each of these chairs takes a different approach to the role, leading to other experiences in the role. In these cases, “call to duty” chairs mostly stuck with the status quo, and the “personal mission” chairs took a more entrepreneurial approach. Regardless of the individual chair’s approach, all department chairs engage in a level of independence in their decision-making (Frey, 2021). That independence requires department chairs to exercise their discretion as department leaders. While chairs usually report to deans or provosts, department chairs still operate within a level of freedom beyond their supervisor’s purview, in which they can rely on their judgment/discretion to make decisions.

Department chairs often come into their role with little training or guidance (Walker & Friel, 2020). This may be due to the uniqueness of the role, as it could be challenging to create and maintain training materials applicable across all disciplines/units at a university. In his book, *The Department Chair: A Practical Guide to Definitive Leadership*, Jochum reports that two-thirds of department chairs receive no training. 72% of the remaining third received ten or fewer training hours (Jochum, 2022). Walker and Friel (2020) mention that administrative training for department chairs is usually trial by fire. Trial-by-fire training differs from formalized training in that a formalized approach would provide chairs with an understanding of the types of decisions they will need to make and the ramifications of those decisions. Instead, this trial-by-fire method forces chairs to rely on the lessons learned from their initial choices to guide how they will handle future situations. This is not unique to the department chair role but appears across other higher-education administrative positions (Walker & Friel, 2020). The lack of training and preparedness means new chairs must rely on their own understanding and judgement to make decisions (Calegari et al., 2015). This trial-by-fire experience in the low-level chair role could be seen as an opportunity by the organization that prepare faculty for future higher administrative positions.

With lack of training, new department chairs may feel overwhelmed and unconfident in their decision-making ability. They may begin relying on standing traditions and procedures not to rock the proverbial boat. A more cynical perspective may find a purpose to this madness. Purposefully under-preparing chairs for their roles could increase the chairs' reliance on upper management to weigh in on decisions. This reliance on upper administration would help ensure that chairs align with university-wide

strategic plans and policies. In either case, lacking training can limit department chairs' effectiveness by steepening the position's learning curve. Without proper background information and training, chairs may feel less empowered to implement new initiatives or make departmental changes while acclimating to the role. Gmelch et al. (2017) report that fewer than half felt competent in a study of 305 department chairs after nine months. However, after a year of service, 76.9% felt confident in their role (Gmelch et al., 2017). In *The Changing Role of the Department Chair in the Shifting Landscape of Higher Education*, Weaver et al. reported on the short tenures of faculty in the department chair role (one to three years) (Weaver et al., 2019). Considering that 76.9% of chairs do not begin to feel confident in their role until after serving for one year, combined with the generally short tenures, it becomes clear that department chairs face difficult obstacles when attempting to make effective changes.

There is little research that discusses the qualities, skills, or abilities necessary to be an effective department chair (Goodall et al., 2017). Goodall et al. found that departments that appoint distinguished scholars (individuals with highly cited works) as chairs tend to see an increase in departmental scholarship productivity (2017). Given this, it stands to reason that individual department chairs' knowledge, skills, and abilities can influence the trajectory of their department.

As department leaders, chairs set the departmental culture (Jochum, 2022). Chairs that exhibit mentorship, empathy, and self-reflection can assist in creating a healthy organizational culture that can promote productivity and success within the department (Jochum, 2022). These skills can be influential in helping shape the effectiveness of departmental faculty.

Since department chairs often act as intermediaries between their faculty and higher administration, they must walk a tightrope of politics, management, and administrative duties, often yielding little reward in the long run (Kruse, 2020). In a survey of 45 chairs, Kruse found they experience tension across a variety of venues, including (1) tension between one's role as a faculty member and as a manager, (2) tension between faculty in the department and themselves, (3) tension between administrative and faculty workload, as well as (4) tension between upper administration and themselves (Kruse, 2020). However, with all these tensions in mind, Kruse reports that most participants continued and persevered in their role because they felt they could implement change for the better.

Explicit and Implicit Duties

The literature discusses several explicit responsibilities for which department chairs are tasked. Many of these would likely be found in the chair's job description, including tasks like accreditation reporting, course scheduling, responding to student concerns, and building the course schedule (Calegari et al., 2015; Rhoades, 2020). Chairs are also expected to be available to meet with faculty and students as issues arise, respond to requests from deans, provosts, and/or university presidents, and provide support and guidance to faculty members as needed. In their leadership capacity, chairs also serve as the face of the department, being responsible for setting the perceived tone of the department to outsiders. This is an essential factor of the role, as it plays an integral piece of the hiring process.

Chairs often meet with faculty and staff job candidates or serve as a point of contact for recruiting new faculty members (Hunt & Jones, 2015). This duty provides the

department chair with a significant amount of influence over the hiring process. For instance, if a department chair meets with a prospective faculty member during an interview and were to offend the interviewee unintentionally, the slight could sway a qualified candidate away from joining the faculty. Hunt and Jones (2015) reported that perceived compatibility with the department chair indicates whether newly graduated doctoral students choose to accept a position. In this way, department chairs play a critical role in recruiting new faculty members.

Coordinating department service requirements is another example of a department chair's explicit duties. These duties include accreditation studies, school and university committee memberships, staffing at graduation or recruitment events, and/or other department programming. Chairs may attempt to build buy-in from potentially reluctant faculty (Calegari et al., 2015; Lester & Kezar, 2011). Faculty may see these service requirements as unnecessary burdens that take time away from their research, scholarship, and teaching responsibilities, which yield more importance in tenure and promotion reviews (Domingo et al., 2022). Domingo et al. conducted a study of faculty service workloads and found that women and women of color experience higher rates of committee service work than their male counterparts (Domingo et al., 2022). The study also revealed that faculty of color are often expected to pay “cultural taxation” by being nominated to serve on various department and university committees to increase committee diversity. One respondent to the study reported feeling the need to serve as the department’s expert for issues facing their affinity groups (Domingo et al., 2022). Underrepresented female minority faculty also reported having to participate in invisible

service to students by serving as advisors and mentors to students who have similar backgrounds and demographics (Domingo, 2022).

Domingo et al. (2022) claim that women are socialized differently than men when it comes to providing help and assistance, with women likely to be more amicable in aiding. This perspective allows men to more readily say “no” when asked to participate in service, whereas women feel more societal pressure to say “yes.” Therefore, when a department chair needs to assign a faculty member to a committee, and they know they might meet opposition from men in their department, chairs might go directly to a woman who would likely say yes. When this occurs over and over, the service load in the department becomes more burdensome for women and faculty of color (Domingo et al., 2022). One participant in the research said of the problem:

I think we need training for chairs on this campus. Because it is unfair. The chairs on the campus they are fabulous individuals, and they get zero training on how to sort of delegate or structure the workload . . . structuring the workload is the issue. (Domingo et al., 2022).

We can see how they impact departmental workload equity by recognizing that chairs use their discretion when choosing who to ask to participate in service activities. Opting to ask a woman rather than a man, for fear of receiving pushback, creates gender inequity and injustice that can lead to job dissatisfaction for women faculty (Domingo et al., 2022) (O’Meara, 2014).

In addition to their explicit duties, chairs are also responsible for specific implicit duties as the leader of their department: setting the tone and culture of the department,

modeling professional expectations, managing conflict, problem-solving, and motivating the department to achieve its goals. These implicit duties directly impact the office culture and environment of the department, which O'Meara (2014) asserts as an important factor faculty consider when considering leaving. For instance, faculty and staff may feel pressured to respond if the department chair sends emails outside of working hours. By not setting a clear professional expectation of whether an outside-of-business-hours response is required, the department chair can cause undue stress on faculty and staff, disrupting their work-life balance. A department chair who ineffectively manages conflict or is conflict-avoidant may end up perpetuating or escalating levels of conflict within the department, which would harm the overall department. A department chair who cannot collaborate within the department to find solutions to problems and allows problems to fester will further increase job dissatisfaction within the department. Finally, a department chair who fails to motivate their faculty and staff to achieve internal and external goals may cause the department to face significant consequences from deans and other administrators.

In each example of these implicit duties, chairs can utilize their discretion and impact the culture of their department. How a chair uses their discretion in these areas highly depends on their perspective and understanding of the situation (Kakabadse et al., 2009). Their decision-making will directly impact the department's culture, the work-life balance of faculty and staff, the career trajectories of departmental faculty, and the larger school or university. In this way, chair discretion significantly influences the organizational culture within the department.

Decision Making: Liberty and Discretion

As leaders of their departments, the decisions that department chairs make have ramifications for the larger unit. To better understand the possibilities of types of decisions that chairs can make, we must recognize that some department chairs will be limited by the lack of authority that their role provides to them. This section describes the degrees of freedom that department chairs can operate within and how their varying roles can offer more or less the ability to change their departments.

Liberty

One understanding of the possibilities for leadership choice comes from Isaiah Berlin, who writes about positive and negative liberty. Negative liberty is the freedom to pursue something without being stopped or hindered by other entities. In contrast, positive liberty is related to having the ability and resources to act upon one's freedom (Carter, 2021). For example, Mark and Dan were both born in 1990 in the same city and as adults, Mark and Dan shared the dream of home ownership. On Mark's 25th birthday, his parents gifted him a down payment on a home. Conversely, Dan had to work and save money until he was 45 to afford the down payment for his house. Because of the support he received from his parents, Mark was able to achieve his dream twenty years earlier than Dan. In this case, Mark had access to resources that assisted him in realizing his dream, whereas Dan did not. Therefore, Mark had the positive liberty to experience home ownership on his 25th birthday, whereas Dan was constrained by the negative liberty of lack of resources for an additional twenty years. It is important to apply this concept of positive and negative liberty to the department chair authority discussion, as it can help us better understand the perceived and actual scope of some

department chair's ability to make discretionary decisions. One department chair may come into their role with more liberty due to their tenure status, name recognition within the field, or simply because they are a white male in academia. Whereas another department chair may come into the role with less liberty, being more constrained by external forces like not having tenure, not having departmental faculty support, or lacking previous leadership opportunities.

To better understand the scope of liberty a department chair has in decision-making, we should consider some identifying factors that impact the level and type of liberty they might have. Several other factors may provide more positive liberty to department chairs than they might perceive themselves as having. For instance, a professor with tenure serving as a department chair might feel the liberty to be bold in their discretionary decision-making since they have the security of tenure. Whereas a younger, less established faculty member serving as department chair may limit their use of administrative discretion and kowtow to the wishes of their dean in hopes of creating job security.

Another example would be to examine faculty support. If a department chair has a supportive and engaged faculty, they may have more positive liberty in achieving their unit's goals. For instance, if a department chair were looking to increase the diversity of their faculty, and their faculty supported this effort, that department chair would have more positive liberty to achieve their goal. Conversely, if a chair does not have faculty support to increase department diversity, the chair may have more difficulty reaching the goal. Given this, we must acknowledge that disparities in administrative discretion

will exist inside the institutions (rules and laws) and within the individual (ability and resources).

While individual characteristics may play a role in the perceived level of administrative liberty, unit-orientated variables should also be considered. These characteristics may resemble established rules and laws that impact positive and negative liberties. These variables may be factors of the department chair's job description, meaning that these are areas where they may have no discretion or that the administrative nature of these areas may impact their liberty to use their discretion. By procuring this information, the study will be able to gauge better the scope of the impact of the department chair's discretion and better understand their workload.

The size of the department in which the chair works can provide information related to the complexity of the department. A chair of a smaller department might be able to exercise their discretion more readily by having a smaller, more agile staff and faculty. In contrast, a larger department might require more stringent policies to ensure equality across the board. The number of faculty that the department chair manages should be collected as it can help me identify if the additional amount of faculty impacts their ability to use discretion. The number of students should be considered as well. If the department has a manageable number of students, the chair may not have to use their discretion in the same way another chair with dwindling student numbers might have to when canceling low-enrolled courses. The number of programs that a department chair oversees could also affect their ability to make discretionary choices. Suppose a department has an undergraduate and a graduate program. In that case, the

chair may have to decide which faculty teach at which level, whereas a unit with only an undergraduate program would not need to consider that.

Nonacademic functions required by the department chair are also of interest to the study. This would include things like participation in student recruitment or retention events. Understanding the full scope of the chair's role can give the study insight into the additional areas where chairs might be allowed more liberty. These factors will provide the study a deeper glance into the workload of department chairs, helping to determine which areas of the role they have more freedom in. Either way, these variables enable the study to understand department chair roles and how the intricacy of each role impacts their ability to use discretion.

By using the concepts of positive and negative liberty in association with administrative authority, I better establish the factors that allow department chairs to make choices at will. This information will explain why some chairs may feel more inclined to utilize their discretion than others. Those factors can help us understand the full scope of the role and how a more effective department chair experience can be achieved through proper training and resources. This can help the department and the chair achieve their individual and shared goals. By comparing the collected variables against the self-perceived level of administrative liberty, I can determine variables and factors that chairs may be able to assist in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion across the institution and the field of higher education.

Discretion

Due to the lack of literature surrounding the use of discretion by department chairs, I am relying on the literature and terms from the field of public administration to

analyze how department chairs utilize discretion. In his work on street-level bureaucrats, Lipsky (2010) describes discretion as vital to all interactions between bureaucrats and the public. Due to the complexities of everyday life, bureaucrats hardly ever encounter the same situation twice, which means that each situation may need to be handled uniquely. However, policies and practices are implemented to provide some level of equity and equality across these varying scenarios. In this uniqueness, discretion thrives. When the intricacies of a situation cause a need for deviation from the standard operating procedure, administrators may rely on their own ethics, judgment, psychology, politics, or personal agendas to make decisions (Kakabadse et al., 2009, p. 112). While there may be protocols to guide bureaucrat's decision-making, there are still times when there is no prescribed course of action. In these cases, bureaucrats must rely on their discretion to make decisions (Lipsky, 2010). In these times, bureaucrats intentionally or unintentionally shape policy implementation and policy outcomes. The impact of these discretionary decisions also changes the shape and direction of the organization. Therefore, the autonomy presented in administrative discretion presents opportunities for leadership development that can impact overarching policy goals (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2019). By comparing department chairs to street-level bureaucrats, we can better understand how the department chair's use of discretion impacts the shape and direction of their department, its goals, and the faculty body.

Discretion in Public Administration

Discretion has long been studied in Public Administration, as it is an important part of policy implementation at every level (Lipsky, 2010). In 1887, Woodrow Wilson discussed the dichotomy of politics and administration in *The Study of Administration*, in

which he detailed the benefits of balancing the relationship between politicians and the administrative branch, in which administration could be free from the manipulations of politics. This division would give administrators some authority and discretion over how administration is run while allowing politics to guide their work (Wilson, 1887). Since there is little literature related to department chair discretion, I will apply the bureaucratic discretion literature to the department chair role to strengthen the comparison of department chairs to street-level bureaucrats further. To fully understand how outcomes are achieved, we need to understand individual administrative actions' role on the larger unit (Farmer, 2005). These individual actions and interactions occur every time a member of the public interacts with a bureaucrat. These bureaucrats could be Department of Motor Vehicles employees, postal workers, or law enforcement officers. An example of discretion at this level can be seen when a law enforcement officer pulls over a driver for speeding but opts to give a warning rather than issuing a ticket. There may be several factors the officer weighs before making the decision, which are likely to be unique to each situation. A different officer might not take the same approach. Each of these interactions contributes to larger implications; for instance, if an entire law enforcement agency opted to give warnings rather than tickets, drivers in their jurisdiction may be more inclined to speed in that area if they know there are fewer chances for legal ramifications. This could, in turn, lead to more dangerous roads and more accidents. Each of these interactions is political in nature, not only in the sense that they are a part of the policy process but also that individual political judgment is used to make decisions (Rosenbloom et al., 2009). The ability to use personal judgment in this way is discretion.

History of the Use of Bureaucratic Discretion

A review of the history of Public Administration in the U.S. can shed light on how discretion shapes organizations, particularly who gets to utilize discretion. Because discretion plays a critical role in how organizations operate, organizations may opt to place individuals in leadership positions whose background, political beliefs, or prior experiences align with the organization's goals. By carefully selecting individuals whose discretionary decisions will align with the organization's goals, the organization can safeguard the use of discretion to achieve its goals. This can be seen throughout the history of American bureaucracy through the various means by which individuals were selected for administrative roles. Similarly, deans may place certain faculty members as chairs based on the dean's goals. For instance, if the dean wants a department to publish more research, they may select a successful researcher/publisher to step into the chair role.

The history of Public Administration can be broken down into three eras: the gentlemen's era, the spoils era, and the merit era. Each of these eras is reflective of their periods and was utilized due to the culture of each era. For example, during the gentlemen's era, many bureaucratic positions were given to elite members of society (wealthy, educated, white, land-owning men) based on their standing within the community (Rosenbloom et al., 2009).

In the spoil era, administrators were appointed based on their political affiliation. Newly elected presidents would appoint their political followers into administrative positions (ergo, to the victor goes the "spoils"). By doing so, presidents held more

control over the government by ensuring that these bureaucrats would utilize their discretion in a way that would support their policy objectives. Rosenbloom, 2009).

The third era, the merit era, was enacted by passing the Pendleton Act in 1883, which established the Civil Service Commission. Selection for administrative positions relied on principles of scientific management to select candidates who were best prepared for the position's needs. The merit era saw the enacting of competitive testing for administration appointments and the removal of any need for political patronage in administrative positions (Rosenbloom, 2009).

These various forms and reasons related to the selection of these administrators can be compared to the multiple ways that department chairs are selected for their positions. Mirroring the gentlemen's era, a department chair elected by their faculty into their position may use their discretion to better serve the faculty that elected them to maintain their appointment and relationships with their departmental faculty. A department chair appointed by their dean may have more patronage to their dean and their dean's goals and, therefore, may utilize their discretion to better serve their dean's interests, similar to bureaucrats in the spoils era. Department chairs hired via a competitive search may have the experience, qualifications, and skills necessary to perform their duties better. These department chairs may utilize their discretion based on previous experiences, learning from their mistakes, or knowing what works best. Being able to make distinctions on how discretion is used based upon the type of appointment the department chair received is valuable in better understanding the system in which they operate and to whom they feel allegiance to.

Department Chairs as Bureaucrats

As the leaders of their departments, department chairs act as supervisors for their faculty and often serve at the first administrative level of the academic institution. In this way, department chairs act as street-level bureaucrats and must utilize their discretion in governing their departments. Carrington argues that discretion has two components: the freedom to choose between two or more options and the freedom to act or not act in each situation (Carrington, 2005). The utilization of discretion can also occur when an administrator is placed in a position and asked to make decisions based on their experience and expertise. By relying solely on their judgement and experiences to make decisions, administrators may not be fully aware of the full impact of their decision. This type of discretion is usually written into job descriptions as akin to 'provide leadership to the unit' and relies on an individual's judgment to make decisions within a specific scope of authority (Carrington, 2005). For instance, if it is within the department chair's authority to create the class schedule for the upcoming semester, they may use their discretion to publish the same schedule from previous semesters. In this way, the department chair has utilized their discretion and has opted not to make any changes. Ergo, the department chair, utilized their judgment and chose not to act. The chair may have made this decision based on the ease of republishing, or perhaps the chair does not see any issues with the current schedule, or maybe they felt they lacked the information to make any changes. Another department chair may work with their faculty to create a departmental course schedule conducive to individual faculty needs/time constraints. However, no matter the reason, deciding not to act is an exercise of discretion.

Carrington (2005) also points out that the level of discretion an individual holds can be perceived differently. For instance, a department chair who has been in the role for many years may better understand the full scope of their discretion. In contrast, a newly appointed chair may hesitate to utilize their discretion fully. Magid Igarria and Wayne Wormley (1992) describe discretion as a form of autonomy that can be utilized to build influence and authority in an organization. This autonomy and authority can influence job performance, job satisfaction, and job effort in supervisees. Faculty members' job performance, job satisfaction, and job effort can all play a role in determining organizational culture within academic departments. Their study of management information systems professionals found that Black professionals believed they had less discretionary authority than their white counterparts. The department chair's perceived level of discretion directly impacts their use of discretion. If the department chair senses they do not have the authority to decide, they may avoid acting at all due to their belief that the decision is out of their jurisdiction. Or the decision to not act could be how they exercise their discretion.

Carrington (2005) goes on to highlight the pros and cons of the use of discretion by street-level bureaucrats. In favor of bureaucrats utilizing their discretion, Carrington explains that discretion can increase equity in services and simplify the implementation of vague laws while also creating efficiencies that benefit the organization and its constituents. Arguments against using discretion include potential lack of information necessary to make a good judgment, overstepping authority, inequality through potential bias, and misuse of scarce resources (Carrington, 2005). For instance, a department chair who is new to their role may use their discretion to cancel a course

section due to low enrollment each semester. However, the chair may need to look beyond enrollment numbers if that course section is necessary to keep students on track for graduation. This would be an example of the lack of information to make good judgments. Perhaps the chair in this situation did not have the expertise or experience to gather sufficient information to consider the future ramifications of their decision. A department chair may overstep their authority by designing a course schedule where all courses are online. The chair may have received input from faculty and students regarding their wants for more online course opportunities. However, the chair might not be aware of accreditation issues in offering solely online options. An example of a chair promoting inequality through potential bias might arise from the chair's internal perception of faculty roles. For instance, if a chair were to value research and scholarship over teaching, the chair may inadvertently treat term teaching faculty as less than simply because their work may not contribute as heavily to the department's research goals. Finally, a department chair may fall victim to utilizing their discretion as a misuse of scarce resources by hiring too many adjunct faculty for a given semester, creating a situation where no classes are filled to their maximum capacity.

Use of Discretion in Post-Traditional Governance

David John Farmer (2005) continues the discussion of street-level bureaucrats and their discretion by moving the conversation away from whether discretion should or should not be used and more towards the idea that discretion is inherent to positions within organizations and that we should utilize discretion by providing training, knowledge, and skills to bureaucrats that allows them to fully understand and use their discretion to better their organization. Farmer (2005) refers to this bureaucratic style as

post-traditional governance. By recognizing discretion as a part of everyday leadership, Farmer aims to empower bureaucrats to make bureaucracy more just and nimbler, easily adjusting to fit the needs and changes of a dynamic world. Farmer borrows a metaphor from Socrates when he states that bureaucrats should act as gadflies, stinging the legs of the government to move it forward rather than allow it to become stagnant and unresponsive to the needs of the public. Department chairs can act as Socrates' gadfly and use their discretionary influence to push against the status quo and engage in decision-making that promotes inclusivity in their departments. For instance, by promoting and encouraging participation in university-sponsored diversity training, department chairs show that they, as leaders, value diversity. By setting this value, faculty members may be more inclined to begin discussing the department's diversity and how improvements can be made.

Farmer describes three concepts that bureaucrats can use to enhance the use and understanding of discretion in their positions: 1) thinking as play, 2) justice as seeking, and 3) practice as art. Thinking as play describes an effort to force bureaucrats and administrators to think creatively, outside pragmatism and efficiency, to imagine how the world ought to be rather than how it is (Farmer, 2005). By doing so, Farmer claims that bureaucrats can begin to imagine more creative solutions to their agency and constituents' problems. By paring creativity with discretion, bureaucrats can influence policy implementation in more effective, efficient, and equitable ways without having to be burdened by oversight and bureaucratic red tape. I saw this happen firsthand when an Urban Planning department chair held an annual gingerbread house competition for the faculty at the end of the fall semester. In this case, the department

chair utilized discretion about what constitutes a department meeting to create a space where faculty could enjoy each other's company and form bonds outside the constraints of a traditional faculty meeting or academic space.

"Justice as seeking" is described as a continual search for justice. Recognizing that the uniqueness of each interaction a member of the public has with a bureaucrat prevents a one-size-fits-all approach from being successful, Farmer instead postulates that bureaucrats should be constantly looking for new avenues to justice rather than following prescriptive policies that may not best serve their constituents. An example of a department chair applying the "justice as seeking" perspective could be engaging with literature related to equity in higher education and opting to have open and transparent discussions with faculty about the additional service burdens that tend to fall on the shoulders of women faculty. By regularly engaging and sharing literature about inequity in higher education, department chairs can set the example and expectation that they are committed to creating equity within their department.

Finally, Farmer encourages "practice as art," calling for bureaucrats to act as artists rather than automatons when implementing policy. Farmer asserts that by acting as artists, bureaucrats (and, in this case, department chairs) should be able to act creatively and create solutions uniquely suited to the problems their constituents (departmental faculty) are facing. By utilizing the practice as an art approach, rather than relying on generic methods to treat the symptoms of the problem and not the true cause, department chairs can create influential change within their departments. For instance, if faculty in the department have trouble preparing their annual evaluations, a department chair may take the generic approach of simply forwarding university

documents that outline the process. However, a department chair who engages as an artist may encourage senior faculty members to engage with junior faculty members and mentor them through the preparation of their evaluation documents and share advice about their own previous experiences. The latter approach provides for community building, mentorship, and sharing specific knowledge related to the department or academic field. By enacting these three principles, a shift is made towards post-traditional governance, which seeks to increase effectiveness and equity for bureaucrats and the public.

By viewing the department chair role through a post-traditional governance lens, I can see how discretion, regardless of how much or how little, could be utilized by department chairs to enact changes in their department. For instance, a department chair who opts into “thinking as play” might consider new ways to increase inclusion in the department. An example of this might be a department chair choosing to forgo a traditional faculty meeting and instead use that time to conduct a team-building activity that allows faculty within the department to connect and share experiences, ideas, and forge relationships with one another. Or to rethink the nature of departmental meetings entirely. Instead of utilizing meetings to share information, a chair using thinking as play could share pertinent information through email and use the actual meeting as a more human-centered event that allows for discussion and community building.

In pursuing “justice as seeking,” a department chair might create a more equitable distribution of service commitments. Typically, when reviewing or assigning committee membership, a department chair may ask for volunteers and then select the first raised hand. A department chair seeking justice could work to have in-depth

conversations with faculty members regarding the workload associated with the committee membership and help them better understand how the service commitment could factor into the faculty member's promotion and tenure opportunities. By providing this additional form of mentorship, the faculty member better understands what is required of them and how the appointment fits into their career path. By utilizing their discretion to have this discussion, the department chair has helped create a sense of mentorship and recognition within their department, further strengthening a faculty member's sense of belonging and understanding of their contribution to the department. Department chairs can use discretion to enhance these typical tasks to make them more collaborative, inclusive, and democratic, and in doing so, they promote a healthy department culture.

“Practice as art” within the department chair role may look like a department chair replacing outdated or ineffective department procedures with ones that fit the department's current needs. An example of this would be setting department goals and utilizing the talents of faculty to achieve those goals. For instance, if a faculty member is exceptionally skilled at handling students in crisis, a department chair might encourage that faculty member and provide space, resources, and assistance in training other faculty members on how best to assist students in crisis. By creatively drawing on the strengths of faculty members within the department, the department chair allows faculty space to be creative and share their talents with their colleagues.

In each of these ways, department chairs are utilizing their discretion, whether they know it or not. By using the post-traditional governance lens to review decision-making, it becomes apparent that these discretionary decisions have impacts far

beyond their intended purpose, and those impacts inform the day-to-day office culture within the unit.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Department Chair Role

In 2020, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 74 percent of faculty at higher education institutions in the US were white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Conversely, in 2000, white students comprised 70% of total undergraduate enrollment at degree-granting institutions; that number fell to 56% in 2016 (Indicator 20: Undergraduate Enrollment, 2019). While college student body demographics are changing to become more diverse, colleges and universities are having trouble hiring and retaining underrepresented minority faculty members (Kelly et al., 2017).

The sit-in that occurred at my institution in 2015 was not an anomaly. Students and faculty nationwide have participated in similar activities to show their dissatisfaction with unrepresentative faculty bodies (Libresco, 2015). This has led colleges and universities nationwide to create initiatives to increase their faculty's diversity (Kelly et al., 2017).

In their study, *Recruitment without Retention: A Critical Case of Black Faculty Unrest*, authors Kelly et al. discuss the varying factors that lead to what they describe as the “revolving door” of Black faculty, where Black faculty were leaving the institution at the same rate as they were being hired, essentially making no progress in increasing diversity, preventing an increase the proportion of Black faculty at the institution. (Kelly et al., 2017). Participants in this study recall being heavily recruited by predominately white institutions (PWIs) looking to diversify their faculty. However, once hired,

participants looked back on negative conversations with department members, alluding to their hiring as solely based upon “Affirmative Action” or attempts to comply with university diversity goals rather than their academic accomplishments. These overtly racist statements contribute to creating a workplace climate that is unfriendly to non-white faculty members. Higher education administrators cannot expect to simply solve their faculty diversity issues through recruitment. Administrators and chairs must consider what changes to their department culture need to be made to ensure that underrepresented minority faculty want to continue working at their institution. By creating or promoting an inclusive culture, department chairs can help stymie events within the department that may make underrepresented minority faculty members feel unwelcome.

Underrepresented faculty at predominately white institutions (PWIs) often face issues unseen or unnoticed by their white counterparts. For instance, a Black faculty member may become the de facto advisor for all Black students in their department because those students can form a stronger connection to a faculty member who looks like them or whom they believe they can (Domingo et al., 2022). This adds additional service work to the faculty member’s plate related to advising, the pressure of being a mentor to a large group of students and dealing with the stresses and experiences that students bring to them for assistance and guidance. The lack of acknowledgment of these experiences creates a toxic climate where underrepresented faculty are overworked and undervalued (Kelly et al., 2017). After recognizing the factors that create inequitable service loads for their faculty, department chairs could utilize discretion to act and create a more equitable service distribution across their

department or create a reward system for those faculty who are going above and beyond. Each of these options plays a role in the continuation of the department's climate and can impact faculty retention (O'Meara, 2014).

O'Meara (2014) describes six factors that impact a faculty member's agency to leave or stay at their current institution: 1) professional development resources; 2) work-life climate; 3) person-department fit; 4) transparency; 5) perception of the tenure process, and 6) collegiality. Department chairs have a role in each of these factors. Chairs shape the department's climate by taking advantage of the flexibility of discretion.

Regarding professional development resources, department chairs have varying authority in the allocation of funds; some with budget authority to disperse these funds, while others do not have the same purview. However, even if a department chair cannot directly disperse funds for professional development, they can still encourage faculty to apply for funding, write letters of support for funding, or assist faculty in finding funding outside of the department (dean's office, grants, awards, etc.) (Calegari et al., 2015).

Departmental Organizational Culture

As the department leader, chairs can set the standard for work-life climate in their unit. By modeling effective work-life balance and sharing their experience in finding their own balance, department chairs can act as mentors to younger faculty. For instance, modeling healthy work-life balance might include utilizing flexible working arrangements that allow faculty to work from home on days they are not required to be on campus. Chairs can use their discretion to impact person-department fit by creating mechanisms in which faculty can feel appreciated and supported for their work. This can be done by

utilizing appreciative leadership and calling attention to and celebrating faculty accomplishments during faculty meetings (Lester & Kezar, 2011).

Discretionary actions can promote transparency. By practicing open and honest communication, department chairs set the tone for helping faculty understand and participate in decision-making processes. Since department chairs generally hold associate or professor positions, they have likely been through the promotion and tenure process at their institution (Kruse, 2020). By setting clear guidelines, being transparent about the process, and sharing their experiences, department chairs can provide faculty with information that may assist them in successfully navigating the promotion and tenure process.

Collegiality is the last factor that O'Meara (2014) discusses, stating that a positive climate that promotes healthy social connections between faculty while also creating support networks that faculty can rely on when assistance may be needed. Department chairs can utilize discretion by advocating for university resources and programs to support collegiality within their unit and across schools. Department chairs can also encourage faculty to participate in affinity groups on campus and in professional organizations.

These discretionary examples show how department chairs can utilize discretion to impact faculty retention and the climate of the departments for the better. Department chairs may not choose to act in this way for a variety of reasons, including not believing they have discretion, heavy workloads, absence of rewards and fear of punishment, or lack of resources. These activities require skill, time, and effort that department chairs may not have (O'Meara, 2014).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of the department chair and how chairs use discretion to increase the diversity and inclusiveness of their department.

Research Questions

The following four questions guided this study:

1. How do department chairs describe the scope of their ability to use discretion in their role?
2. How do department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?
3. How do department chairs describe their goals and actions for an inclusive department culture?
4. What challenges do department chairs describe in working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter explains the research methods used and how I settled upon the chosen methods.

Results from Previous Study

The initial thinking about this study is based on a study I conducted in 2021. The 2021 research informed the purpose and research questions and guided several methodological decisions for the current dissertation research.

In fall 2021, I interviewed a convenience sample of ten current and former department chairs about their role of department chair. I previously worked with each during their time as chair in their respective departments. Of the ten invited, I secured seven interviewees. After sending the interview consent form, one participant opted out of the study as they felt uncomfortable participating in an interview related to their current role. This indicated that this and any future study would need to provide participants with a sense of security and anonymity.

I conducted six 45-minute interviews. Three participants identified as women and three as men. Five participants identified as white, and one as Asian. Participants included three professors and three associate professors. All but one participant was tenured. Two participants went on to serve in associate dean roles following their time as department chairs. One participant had served as department chair for ten years; however, the majority (4) had served for three years, and one participant had only served for one year.

The participants were asked a series of questions related to their decision-making process and their time as department chair. Questions varied from training

received, types of decisions, ability to make informed decisions, delegation, formal and informal relationships, and support. Five of the six participants worked in the same school at a large university; the sixth participant worked at the same university but within a different school. All chairs were housed within social science fields. Two participants worked in relatively small departments with nine or fewer full-time faculty members, and the other four were in larger departments with 10 to 15 full-time faculty members.

Findings from the pilot study related to:

1. Department chair training: Chairs reported receiving little to no training for their role.
2. The formal and informal relationships that influenced decision-making: Chairs described relying on various relationships for advice that informed their decision-making. Examples included mentors, their dean's office, faculty in their department, and other department chairs. Second-generation faculty also reported relying on family members.
3. Level of difficulty of department chair roles: Participants listed student issues and budgetary decisions as being easier than the management responsibilities of the role.

Additionally, these chairs described frustration with the lack of clarity around the leadership role, particularly with how it related to navigating relationships with departmental faculty. One participant discussed the difficulty of delegating university service opportunities to faculty within their department, stating that faculty members were reluctant to volunteer for service roles as they felt the service role would take away

from more lucrative work that would readily support their promotion and tenure packages. Two participants discussed how faculty with perceived higher amounts of academic clout would use their position of power to avoid service requests from the chair, creating inequitable service distribution throughout the department.

These findings helped contribute to the formulation of this study. The pilot informed me of my interest in the topic, search terms for the literature review, and the methodology. By building upon the knowledge learned about the department chair's role in the pilot study, this study focused on determining the role department chairs play in increasing the diversity and inclusiveness of their departments.

Case Study Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the department chair and how chairs use discretion to increase the diversity and inclusiveness of their department.

The following four questions guided this study:

1. How do department chairs use discretion in their role?
2. How do department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?
3. How do department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating and maintaining an inclusive department culture?
4. What challenges did department chairs encounter when building a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?

The data and findings from my pilot study guided the literature review. The preliminary study results have allowed for additional insight into the development of this

study, including research questions, participant solicitation, survey questions, interview questions, themes, and overall methodological approach. While the preliminary study mainly focused on the department chair role, this study explored departmental diversity, equity, and inclusion as components of the department chair role.

The case study methodology was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how department chairs can impact department diversity, equity, and inclusion. Creswell asserts that case study methodology can be used to investigate bounded phenomena within a single system to understand phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

Site and Sample

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) was chosen as the site for this study for convenience and timing, as Virginia Commonwealth University is where I study and work. It was also selected for its continued strategic planning commitment to creating diversity, equity, and inclusion on its campus.

Site

In 2015, VCU listed diversity as a core value in its Quest for Distinction strategic plan. The plan describes diversity as “ensuring a climate of trust, honesty, and integrity where all people are valued, and differences are recognized as an asset” (Quest, 2015). The plan’s mission statement says diversity “provides a climate of inclusion, a dedication to addressing disparities wherever they exist, and an opportunity to explore and create in an environment of trust” (Quest, 2015). The document lists Theme I.D. as “Recruit and retain faculty, staff, and senior leadership with the skills and talents to increase quality teaching and learning, high-impact research, and diversity at all levels.” VCU continued to prioritize diversity when it updated its strategic plan in 2018. The plan

was renamed Quest 2025: Together We Transform and included five key focus areas, including Diversity Driving Excellence. The updated plan's mission statement says that VCU will build upon "Deeply engrained core values of diversity, inclusion, and equity that provide a safe, trusting and supportive environment to explore, create, learn and serve" (Quest, 2025). These strategic plans provide context to the university's culture as a place where diversity is appreciated, with a university-wide focus on increasing the diversity of its campus. Additionally, these strategic plans provide additional insight into university-wide diversity initiatives that have impacted the diversity work department chairs undertook within their departments.

Sample

To identify those departments that increased faculty diversity, I analyzed the changes in hiring outcomes across all 83 departments on VCU's Monroe Park Campus between 2017-2022. Institutional data was requested from the Office of Institutional Research and Data Support detailing the number of faculty members by department in 2017 and again in 2022, along with the number of underrepresented minority faculty members in those departments in both years.

In 2017, there were 1,078 underrepresented minority faculty members across these 83 departments. By 2022, the number had increased by 23 to 1,101. The university reported that underrepresented minority faculty members made up 11.6% of the total faculty in 2017; in 2022, that number grew to 16.3%. Forty departments increased the number of underrepresented minority faculty members between 2017 and 2022: six departments increased by one underrepresented faculty member, nineteen by two or more underrepresented minority faculty members, eleven by three or more

underrepresented minority faculty members, and four departments by four or more underrepresented faculty members. This growth is particularly interesting, given that VCU initiated a preemptive hiring freeze on April 7th, 2020, in response to the forecasted budget repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic (Rao, 2020). This hiring freeze exemplifies additional burdens departments faced from 2017 to 2022, in which the observed growth in diversity occurred.

I identified 14 of the 40 departments that showed exemplary growth for potential inclusion in the study. These departments increased in one of two ways: growth in total number of underrepresented minority (URM) faculty members and/or growth in percentage of underrepresented faculty members. On the Monroe Park Campus in 2022, department size ranged from four to 64 faculty members in the largest department.

These 14 departments contained seven social science departments, four science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) departments, two arts departments, and one humanities department. In Table 1, each department has been labeled with ARTS (arts), HUMS (humanities), SS (social science), or STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) to signify discipline type, along with a digit to distinguish individual departments within disciplines. Table 1 details the total number of faculty in 2017 and 2022, the total number of URM faculty within those years, and the total change in URM that occurred. The table also details the overall percentage of URM faculty within departments in 2017 and 2022 and the percentage change that occurred from 2017 to 2022. These multiple measures identify shifts in departmental make-up. For instance, the ARTS2 department gained two URM faculty between 2017

and 2022, which resulted in a 22.7% increase in URM faculty. However, these gains also shifted the overall departmental faculty population, with URM faculty making up 50% of the department in 2022. SS1 saw an increase of six URM faculty members, which only resulted in a 14.1% shift in URM faculty. Due to the varying sizes of departments in the sample, both actual change and percentage change were considered for possible inclusion in the study.

Table 1

Departments at VCU that Showed Exemplary URM Growth 2017-2022

Department	2017 Total Faculty	2022 Total Faculty	2017 URM	2022 URM	URM Change from 17-22	% URM 2017	% URM 2022	% URM Change 2017-22
ART1	8	9	0	2	2	0.0	22.2	22.2
ART2	11	10	3	5	2	27.3	50.0	22.7
HUMS1	61	64	4	7	3	6.6	10.9	4.4
SS1	38	40	7	13	6	18.4	32.5	14.1
SS2	8	12	2	8	6	25.0	66.7	41.7
SS3	14	18	2	5	3	14.3	27.8	13.5
SS4	53	43	10	13	3	18.9	30.2	11.4
SS5	13	12	0	2	2	0.0	16.7	16.7
SS6	43	54	1	3	2	2.3	5.6	3.2
SS7	36	40	5	7	2	13.9	17.5	3.6
STEM1	49	45	3	6	3	6.1	13.3	7.2
STEM2	19	19	0	3	3	0.0	15.8	15.8
STEM3	26	26	0	3	3	0.0	11.5	11.5
STEM4	13	17	4	6	2	30.8	35.3	4.5

The risks and benefits of participation were identified and discussed with participants to consider before consenting and participating in the study. The significant risks to participation were feelings of uncomfortableness during the interview or survey when asked to reflect on their decision-making. Another risk acknowledged was the potential for a possible breach of confidentiality. However, the consent (Appendix A)

form reiterated that all possible confidentiality protections would be utilized to protect participant responses.

Entry. In order to gain entry to the departments and department chairs, I identified department chairs through departmental websites and obtained their contact information. I emailed the department chairs a description and a brief timeline of the study, along with an explanation of the participant activities and time commitment (see Appendix C). Of the fourteen department chairs contacted, seven responded. After this initial email, two agreed to participate in the study, and two declined. Two other chairs responded that they had just started their tenure as chair and directed me to email the previous chair (both of whom remained on faculty in the department after stepping away from the chair role). Both of these former chairs agreed to participate. A fifth chair responded that they wanted approval from the Dean before agreeing to participate. After a week, the fifth chair responded, saying their Dean approved participation. After the five department chairs responded that they were interested and willing to participate in the study, an additional email was sent with the participant consent form attached for their review (see Appendix A). This allowed the chairs to discuss any concerns they had about the study with me prior to the interview. I attempted to make every reasonable effort to ensure the comfort and safety of participants in the study. Chairs were then asked to review and sign the consent form through an electronic document signing software.

Methodological Approach

I chose a multiple case study approach that explored the phenomena in each participating department where faculty diversity increased between 2017 and 2022.

Data was collected through interviews with chairs and department faculty, surveys, and content analysis of department websites to gain insight into departmental diversity and inclusion. Since I was investigating departmental changes between 2017 and 2022, data collection in interviews was retrospective, relying on memory and previous perceptions of events that occurred during that period.

Through each case study, I aimed to determine replicative data points and patterns that related to the influence department chairs had on diversity, equity, and inclusion. (Halkias et al., 2022). Data were collected through surveys, interviews, content analysis, and observations. These collective cases provided insight into the phenomenon and conditions within the departments that allowed for and contributed to increased diversity. By reviewing each department as its own case, logical generalizations were inferred through observed patterns. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts, content analysis, and observations was conducted. The common themes identified commonalities and interventions that effectively increased the diversity and inclusion of the departments.

Halkias et al. (2022) point out that multiple case study methodology is especially useful as it can undermine social constructs like male dominance and white supremacy by relying on constructivism and relativism perspectives (Halkias et al., 2022). This approach paired well with the research questions, which were aimed to better understand how department chairs successfully utilized their discretion to undermine the traditional white male hegemony in academia.

Data Collection

This study explored the “human part of the story” (Jacob & Ferguson, pg. 1, 2012) of the role of chairpeople in increasing underrepresented minority participation in academic. I utilized multiple data collection approaches (interviews, surveys, and content analysis) to identify data that would lead to an understanding of how department chair decision-making impacted the diversity and culture of inclusion within the department.

Pre-Interview Survey

Once participants enrolled in the study, they received a brief survey that collected information about their personal background and history, demographic information, and additional information about their department (see Appendix F). The electronic survey was deployed via Google Forms and sent to department chairs’ e-mail addresses. The survey included a mix of multiple choice, Likert scale, and short answer style questions that collected background information. Results from the survey were used to prepare for interviews to understand better the experiences and paths that brought participants to the department chair role. Demographic information collected included age, race/ethnicity, and gender. Each of these areas helped assess participants’ identities and provided summary information for describing the sample (Groves et al., 2009). The survey also collected information related to the department, including the departmental population information (number of faculty, staff, GTAs, student workers, and students), a breakdown of faculty positions (number of full professors, associate professors, assistant professors, term faculty, and adjunct faculty), and information related to the department chair’s perception of their department’s organizational culture. Additionally,

the survey helped me better understand the departmental hierarchy and organization. This helped clarify what staff (advisors, student workers, etc.) and positions (assistant department chairs, adjuncts, term faculty, etc.) report to the department chair and what that reporting structure looks like.

Data collected from the survey was used to inform and streamline interviews. By reviewing the results of surveys before interviews, I was able to utilize survey results in the interview and follow up on specific points of interest. For instance, when a department chair revealed in the survey that they are a first-generation college student, I asked for additional details as to how their first-generation status may have impacted their perspective as chair. Additionally, when a department chair responded in the survey that they did not have any staff members reporting to them, questions related to staff were omitted from their interview, and streamlining the interview allowed for more discussion of pertinent topics.

All five chairs responded to the pre-interview survey. The responses provided more profound insight into the group of participants. Chairs who participated in the study came from varying academic backgrounds across three schools/colleges at VCU. Four of the five chairs identified as cis men, and the fifth identified herself as a cis woman. Four chairs identified their race as white, and one preferred not to say their race. All five chairs reported having tenure; three were professors, and two were associate professors. Three of the five identified themselves as first-generation faculty members. Overall, the group's average number of years serving in the department chair role was 4.9, with eight years as the maximum and one year as the minimum. Among them, the

chairs had an average of 15.1 years of affiliation with their current departments. The shortest affiliation was nine years, and the longest was 22.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews of department chairs were the primary data collection approach. Tried and true, interviewing has been a hallmark of qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2013; Jacob & Ferguson, 2012). Semi-structured interviews allowed for a deeper and more meaningful conversation with participants in which their responses and experiences highlight the discussion (Frey, 2021). These semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions to direct the conversation and allow participants to reflect on their experiences within their departments. Due to each department's unique and varying nature, a semi-structured interview (in conjunction with data collected from the pre-interview survey) allowed for flexibility in ensuring that questions asked during the interview pertain to the individual interviewee (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Interview Protocol

For interview questions, I utilized the four-phase interview refinement protocol described by Castillo-Montoya (2016) to ensure the interview framework is consistent, reliable, relevant, and trustworthy (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Phase one of the protocol requires ensuring that each interview question aligned with the overarching research questions. All questions asked during the interview were relevant to the study. Careful evaluation of the relevance of each interview question allowed for a streamlined discussion in which every part of the conversation was valuable to the study. To accomplish this, I created a matrix that shows the alignment of each interview question

with one of the guiding research questions (see Appendix G). This same matrix was applied to code results for thematic analysis and the identification of gaps.

Phase two of the interview refinement protocol involved creating questions and an interview structure that promoted a conversational dynamic during the interview. By asking open-ended questions and allowing participants space to expand on their own experiences in a comfortable and engaging setting, interview participants were able to fully engage with the interview questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Interview questions were structured in one of four categories described by Creswell (2007): (1) introductory, (2) transition, (3) key, and (4) closing. Introductory questions aimed to generate general conversation about the participants and their experiences (for example: Tell me a little about your professional history? Were you hired, elected, or appointed to the department chair role?). Transition questions were used to guide the conversation toward the key questions (for example: Can you tell me about your time in the department chair position?). Key questions aimed to specifically address research question topics (for example: Are there any initiatives you specifically sought out to improve the diversity of the department's faculty?). Finally, closing questions were used to indicate to participants that the interview is ending and invite them to share any additional thoughts or experiences that they feel may be relevant (for example: Is there anything else you would like to discuss about the diversity of your department?).

The third and fourth phases of interview protocol refinement were used to receive feedback on interview questions and the overall flow of the interview and pilot the interview, respectively. I reflected on the questions in the previous study, edited previous questions, and developed new questions that expanded upon the previous

information learned. In addition to reflecting and reworking the initial questions, I also performed a mock interview with my advisor to ensure all questions were relevant and necessary. This mock interview focused on ensuring that the interview flow was natural and engaging and that questions could be easily understood, not vague or confusing (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I also reflected on the pre-study interview process to refine the interview process further.

Departmental Faculty Interviews

Department chairs were asked to identify two departmental faculty to provide additional information related to departmental history and culture. Three chairs responded to the request and sent forward two names each. A fourth chair sent three names. One chair did not respond to the request. A total of nine faculty members were contacted, and seven agreed to participate. These faculty members were asked about their perception of their chair's influence on the increased diversity in their department. I requested to interview those faculty members via email (see Appendix E). These short interviews aimed to gain additional insight into the department's organizational culture through additional departmental perspectives. Ideally, the faculty selected for these interviews would have been long-standing department members. They would be able to provide historical context for decisions, initiatives, and culture shifts over time that contributed to the increased diversity of the department.

These interviews were focused on their perception of the department's culture towards diversity, equity, and inclusion over time. These interviews followed a similar four-phase question approach with introductory (example: when did you join the department?), transition (example: what was your first impression of the department's

diversity?), key (example: how has the department's culture towards diversity, equity, and inclusion changed throughout your time in the department?) and closing questions (For example, is there anything else you would like to mention about your department's diversity, equity, and inclusion?)

The department chair and faculty interviews helped paint a more detailed picture of the department's organizational culture. This broader perspective helped ensure the study had multiple viewpoints of the department and how it has changed over time. The additional historical context provided by multiple department members (chairs and faculty member(s)) was used to uncover any pertinent departmental/university historical events that contributed to diversity efforts—for example, uncovering whether departmental faculty participated in university-wide diversity training or initiatives over time, or any specific events that triggered discussions about departmental culture towards diversity, equity, and inclusion. This information provided context to the internal and external forces that influenced their department's diversity and organizational culture.

Interview Transcription and Analysis

Once the interviews concluded, I transcribed them. All identifying data was removed and replaced with basic descriptors (e.g., rather than listing the name and department that a participant is affiliated with, I will instead use descriptors like “large department” and “social science field”).

Transcriptions were then uploaded to NVIVO, a qualitative research software. NVIVO was used to code the transcriptions and analyze the interview data. A codebook was developed based on interview questions, codes used in the pilot, and themes that

arose; the codebook continued to evolve as new codes, themes, and categories emerged. This emergent coding method fit well with the case study approach, which allowed me to continuously upgrade codes as new themes emerged. This approach paired nicely with the inductive nature of the study, allowing for the continued development of themes. Thematic analysis was conducted to draw conclusions about the data collected. These themes helped to build new theories and frameworks for future study of the topic.

Content Analysis

In addition to survey and interview data collection methods, I also examined key departmental content via their websites. Every effort was made to review all publicly available departmental content (websites, course descriptions, public-facing university data, etc).

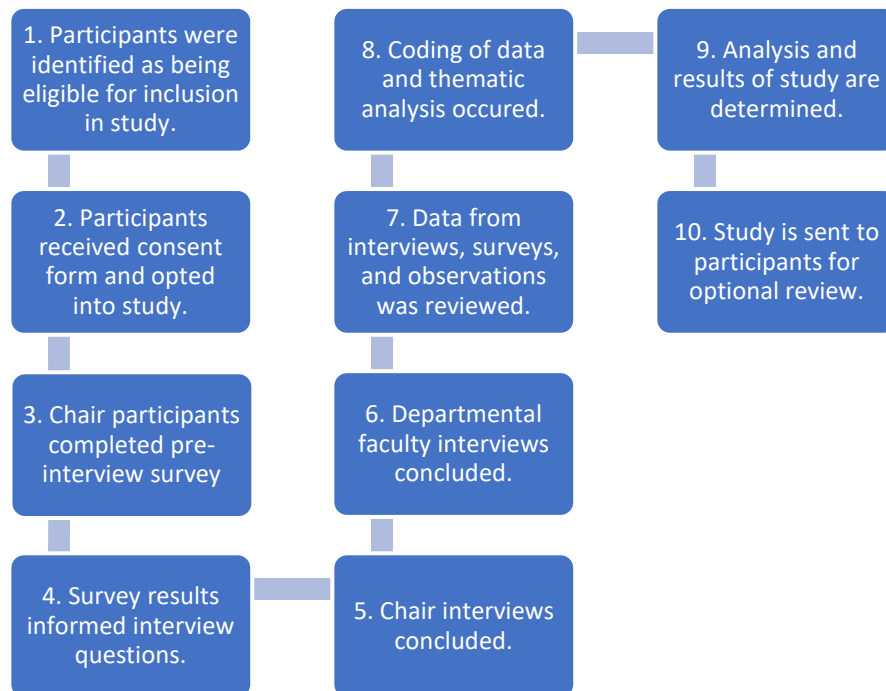
The first analysis examined the departmental website and related university sites. Upon reviewing the department website and social media pages, I looked for text, concepts, and semantic relationships related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (Krippendorff, 2018). This was done by a systematic search, scanning for keywords, concepts, and visual data related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and coding the results into categories (White & Marsh, 2006). The review of departmental websites and university sites was done prior to interviews with department chairs and departmental faculty. These initial reviews helped to inform interviews and provide insight and context that helped streamline interviews.

The content collected was analyzed through thematic analysis to find emergent themes, connections, commonalities, and relationships that existed. Diligent note-

keeping and coding of observations occurred to record decisions and coding methodology to improve reliability. These codes related to how aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion are presented and the context they are presented in to understand better how the content observed reflects and/or contributes to the organizational culture of the department (White & Marsh, 2006). Figure 3 shows the study process.

Figure 3

Study Process



Considerations

Other methodologies were considered for the study, including a more extensive, more in-depth survey, focus groups, and document analysis. However, after conducting the preliminary interviews described in my pilot, it became clear that the individuality of each department, department chair, and the roles and responsibilities assigned to department chairs called for individual interviews and a case analysis of the department.

Individual interviews allowed for deeper investigation into both the role and the person in the role. Relying solely on a survey presented the challenge of being unable to ask follow-up questions to answers given. These follow-up questions were helpful in obtaining clarification to unclear answers and allowed participants to introduce topics to the conversation that may not have been included in a survey.

Focus groups were another method considered that provided similar strengths as interviews. However, focus groups would prove to be more challenging to schedule with the department chair population. Also, due to the lack of consistency in the department chair role, focus group participants may vary significantly in their experience. Initially, I considered conducting a document analysis of available department chair position descriptions. This approach would allow for review of position requirements, duties, knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the department chair position. However, as I learned during the preliminary study, not all department chairs are hired into their position, and therefore, there may not be a position description. Also, a document analysis approach would not yield results about the intricacies, tensions, and decision-making processes that may be unique to certain departments.

Issues with the chosen methodology that needed to be considered are sampling bias, observation bias, researcher subjectivity, and limited generalizability due to the sampling technique. When soliciting participation in the study, participants may have been more likely to opt to participate if they were actively engaged and invested in their department chair role (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). This may have skewed the study results by unwittingly excluding department chairs who feel apathetic towards their administrative role. Due to the sometimes-political aspect of the diversity, equity, and

inclusion conversation, participants may have skewed their answers to questions related to their use of discretion to support (or oppose) diversity efforts to give responses that may be more socially acceptable to the researcher (Babbie, 2008).

Given the complexities of the department chair role, the intricate issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion, the lack of uniformity of departmental structure across the field, and limited literature around the subject of department chair discretion, individual interviews were the best approach to utilize in this study. This case study methodology aligned with the grounded theory perspective and assisted in growing knowledge in this area. This methodology allowed for additional aspects of department chair discretion and its effect on departmental diversity to be discovered inductively as research progressed. This approach also provided flexibility, allowing the study to be nimble and responsive to the individual needs of participants.

Collectively, these factors produced a qualitative study that broadened the understanding of the department chair role and how discretion is used. The methodology used provided multiple perspectives and examples of how department chairs played a role in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

This study was designed to better understand the impact department chair decisions can have on their departments' diversity and inclusion culture. In this chapter, I discuss my findings on how department chairs describe their goals for diversity and inclusion and the scope of their authority when making decisions to impact their departments' diversity and inclusion.

Survey Results

The pre-interview survey collected personal, professional, and departmental background information from the five chair participants. Data collected from the survey emerged into four themes: training and preparation for the chair role, hiring, department size, and feelings about the role.

Training and Preparation for the Chair Role

The chairs had differing paths to the position: Two were elected by department faculty, two were hired after a search, and one was appointed. Three of the chairs (one elected, one appointed, and one hired) indicated that the dean of their school played a role in the chair hiring process. Only two department chairs reported having any training for the role. The first responded by saying their role as an associate chair at their previous university had helped train them for the chair role. The other respondent said they had “a short meeting with the outgoing chair” and “attended a three-day training session through the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute (GEHLI).” GEHLI is a leadership development center at VCU housed within the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. Currently, the center’s website does not list any department chair training opportunities. However, when I entered the search term “VCU

GEHLI Department Chair Training” in Google, the first result led to a portion of the GEHLI site titled “Department Chairs Certification Program.” The About section of the page describes the situation and need for the program:

Chairing an academic department is a demanding role that requires not only leadership skills, but also considerable administrative abilities and knowledge of the University system. Often, faculty who are exceptional scholars and teachers are thrust into the role with little support for the development of these new competencies. Additionally, a number of department chairs are new to the University or have served as chair for a limited time (Virginia Commonwealth University, *Department chairs* 2019).

The most recent schedule of dates for the certification program is listed as “July 9th-July 11th, 2019”. This seemingly archived site describes the Department Chairs Certification Program as an opportunity to develop “the leadership capacities of unit leaders at Virginia Commonwealth University” with a training curriculum that is “designed with input from the provost, deans, and other senior administrators.” (Virginia Commonwealth University, *Department chairs*, 2019). The program objectives are listed as:

1. Clarify the role of the department chair at VCU.
2. Effectively promote the department while contributing to the University’s strategic plan.
3. Build a network of contacts within the University for ongoing problem-solving, support, and information sharing.
4. Provide tips and techniques to function effectively in the department chair position.

5. Gain practical skills in the day-to-day management of departmental affairs.
6. Increase knowledge of state and VCU personnel and fiscal policies
7. Provide information on legal- and compliance-related responsibilities of the department chair.
8. Enhance personal leadership and professional development.

Hiring

Of the departments represented in my study, department sizes ranged from nine faculty members to 47, with a group average of 20 faculty members. Chairs reported their departments as having between four and 18 tenured faculty members; the group's average number of tenured faculty members was nine. Four of the five chairs reported that identifying and hiring adjuncts was a requirement of their role. The chairs reported hiring anywhere between five and 15 adjunct faculty each semester. Chairs reported a few factors as determinants in the number of adjuncts they employ, including fluctuating student enrollment, the number of faculty on leave, and the number of graduate teaching assistants (GTAs). Four chairs indicated they were responsible for assigning courses to adjuncts. The fifth chair, who chaired the largest department, reported that the associate chair in their department handled adjunct teaching assignments. Regarding departmental staff support, the group ranged from one staff member to four. These individuals included academic advisors, fiscal administrators, curriculum administrators, and assistant or associate chairs.

Department Size

The student body sizes of the departments varied greatly. The smallest department enrolled fewer than 100 major students, and the largest had over 650 major students.

However, one of the chairs interviewed indicated that while they had a small number of majors, their department taught more than 4,000 undergraduate students each semester as a part of the university's general education program. Two departments teach solely at the bachelor's level; the remaining three offer bachelor's and graduate degrees at the master's and Ph.D. levels.

Feelings About the Role

When asked to choose which of the following statements best describes their inclination to the chair role, two chairs indicated they wanted to become the department chair; two were hesitant, and one did not want the role. All five chairs found the role of department chair rewarding: three chairs agreed, and two strongly agreed with the statement "the department chair role is rewarding." One department chair agreed, and four strongly agreed that "the department chair's role is important." When allowed to describe the amount of authority department chairs have (on a scale of no authority, little authority, some authority, or a lot of authority), all five department chairs selected that the role had some authority. Four of five chairs reported having much authority over student issues and department budget decisions. Three reported hiring adjunct faculty represented significant authority. Conversely, three chairs identified having little authority over curriculum decisions. When asked if they would consider serving in the role again, one chair responded "yes," three "maybe," and one "no." Although three chairs believed the role had prepared them for future administrative positions, only one of the three was interested in serving in future administrative positions. Table 2 describes information about the individual departments and chairs that participated in the study.

Table 2*Pre-Interview Survey Results*

Department	Department Faculty Size	Student Body Size	Elected, Appointed, or Hired	Desire to be Chair
Department 1	Small (<10)	Small (<100)	Elected	Did not want to be chair
Department 2	Small (<10)	Medium (101-400)	Appointed	Hesitant to be chair
Department 3	Medium (11-20)	Medium (101-400)	Hired	Wanted to be chair
Department 4	Medium (11-20)	Large (>401)	Elected	Hesitant to be chair
Department 5	Large (>21)	Medium (101-400)	Hired	Wanted to be chair

Department Websites

To gain additional insight into the departments represented in my study, I completed a content analysis of the department website, identifying indicators of a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Four departments included clear language in the mission or vision statements, indicating the department valued diversity, equity, and inclusion. Interestingly, these statements generally spoke more to the importance of diversity in the department's academic field rather than the importance of diversity to the department itself. For instance, one department's mission statement suggests that the department values diversity to effectively prepare students to serve diverse and underserved populations after graduation. Another department's website indicated that the department values diverse identities and ideas to provide its students with an innovative education within the social sciences. These two examples indicate that the department is aware of the benefits of diversity in the student body but do not provide

much commentary about the importance of faculty diversity. The sites lacked overt statements showing specific departmental support for diversity, equity, and inclusion in both faculty and student populations.

Although none of the departmental sites had specific information about departmental efforts towards diversity, equity, and inclusion, all five department websites included hyperlinks to their larger school's diversity, equity, and inclusion pages. These schoolwide pages had much more information about each school's efforts. The schoolwide websites for departments 1, 2, and 3 included information about their schools' diversity, equity, and inclusion committees. These sites also listed direct contact information for each school's diversity, equity, and inclusion leaders. The schoolwide diversity, equity, and inclusion website for departments 1 and 2 includes information on how students, faculty, and staff can report diversity, equity, and inclusion concerns to school officials. Department 3's schoolwide site includes hyperlinks to various campus resources for students, faculty, and staff, including diversity training, affinity group information, and local resources in the city for minority populations. The schoolwide sites for departments 4 and 5 included a listing of events, a statement of their school's commitment to diversity, social justice, and equity, and reported the school's student body demographics and graduation rates by race.

All the departments had prominent photos on their website that displayed racially diverse groups of faculty, staff, and students. All websites had a faculty and staff directory with photos of each faculty and staff member. Departments 3, 4, and 5 listed student organizations on their website, some of which included affinity groups within the discipline (for example, the National Association of Black Student Association or LGBTQ

Student Association). These student organization subsites also included photos of diverse student groups, faculty advisors for these student groups, and contact information to learn more about each group.

In addition to the department websites, I also explored VCU's Office of Institutional Equity, Effectiveness, and Success website. This site provides information on each of VCU's schools and colleges, assigning each a diversity index score, an inclusion index score, and an engagement index score. Participating departments were housed across three schools at VCU. Each score is on a five-point scale (1 being poor and 5 being excellent) (Virginia Commonwealth University, Office of Institutional Equity, Effectiveness and Success, *2021 rankings*, 2021). Table 3 presents each index's definitions and the participating schools' individual scores.

Table 3

VCU Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement Index

Diversity Index	Inclusion Index	Engagement Index
<p>The diversity index score is a composite of three areas:</p> <p>Compositional diversity—is the faculty and staff reflective of the student population.</p> <p>Representation equity—is leadership representative of gender/gender identity.</p> <p>Systems diversity—refers to policies, procedures, or statements that show a commitment to diversity.</p>	<p>The inclusion index score is a composite of four areas:</p> <p>Cooperative environment—how leadership encourages communication and collaboration.</p> <p>Empowering environment—the level at which faculty and staff have the resources needed to excel.</p> <p>Fair environment—the level to which faculty and staff are treated fairly.</p> <p>Open environment—how leadership shows support for diversity in all areas.</p>	<p>The engagement index is a composite of three areas:</p> <p>Intrinsic work experience—how faculty and staff show competency and motivation within their roles.</p> <p>Leaders lead—how faculty and staff perceive integrity among leadership.</p> <p>Supervisors' support—how faculty and staff feel trust, respect, and support from their supervisor.</p>

	Diversity Index Rating	Inclusion Index Rating	Engagement Index Rating
School 1	2.90	3.54	3.63
School 2	2.55	3.65	3.68
School 3	4.0	3.72	3.88

The web presence of these units (departments and their schools) generally has some level of discourse related to diversity, equity, and inclusion on their web pages. However, more intentional language on the departments' web pages would help clearly indicate departmental support for diversity. When you consider the combined information from the university, school, and department websites, there is a plethora of information that can help prospective faculty learn more about the departmental culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion if they know where to look. Consolidating all this information into a single, prominent space on departmental websites could clarify and reinforce the department's intentionality around diversity and inclusion to prospective faculty members.

Chair Interviews

Department chair interviews took place between December 11th, 2023, and January 12th, 2024. Each interview question was designed to help answer one of the study's research questions.

Research question 1: How did department chairs describe the scope of their ability to use discretion in their role?

During the interviews, I sensed hesitancy from participants when I directly asked questions about the amount of authority they had to make unilateral decisions. All five chairs preferred to refer to most of their decisions as being made collaboratively with their faculty. Four areas where department chairs reported exercising their discretion were leadership, meetings, hiring, and advocating.

Leadership.

We [academics] think of chairs as having this vision of shaping the department; I still think more collaboratively...I'm not necessarily trying to push an agenda. I don't have a particular agenda that is my own that I want to impose on the department. I really am trying to uphold integrity... I believe in more collaborative leadership, as opposed to top-down leadership.

--a department chair when reflecting on their leadership approach.

The "bottom-up" leadership approach described above was a theme throughout all the chair interviews. All chair participants spoke about getting input from faculty, building consensus, or even voting on decisions that needed to be made. The option to take these more collaborative approaches to decision-making is a discretionary choice. One chair described, "I guess democratic is the word, but I mean, there are very few things I decide without consulting the faculty. We have the kind of room within our faculty meetings where if somebody is passionate, we all listen...I have authority, but I definitely try to do that as one of a group of voices." Another Chair said, "I think if you do

not have consensus, you build consensus...I am very much a constructivist. So, we are going to do this together.”

This form of democratic discretion and open dialogue approach to decision-making is not something chairs are required to do. Chairs with an authoritarian leadership approach might not even communicate to their faculty about their decisions. All five chairs were very passionate in speaking about this topic. Themes of transparency, communication, and collaboration were present in all interviews around decision-making. Chairs reported using various methods to provide space for these discussions to occur. Three chairs spoke specifically about providing time during faculty meetings for these types of discussions, and two offered individual meetings with faculty to discuss certain decisions. Chair participants felt this democratic discretion helped engender trust between themselves and their faculty.

However, all chairs expressed that not all decisions could be made democratically, or even that sometimes they would have to go against the majority opinion to better provide for the department's future. One chair mentioned minor budgetary decisions as one area where restricting input was necessary to ensure the department ran efficiently rather than needing to have full department meetings to discuss office supply orders. Another chair recalled having to make an unpopular decision related to faculty service assignments. This chair reflected on these difficult decisions by saying, “If you are the guy who has to finally pick the answer there, you go into it knowing that you might even make enemies, some of those enemies might have been good friends, and that is something you cannot avoid.” It became apparent through quotes like this one that the chairs held great respect for their relationships with

their colleagues and placed importance on maintaining those relationships as a crucial part of their leadership style. Chairs discussed multiple factors that led to having to make these more complex and unpopular decisions. These factors included issues of confidentiality—not being able to share all the information related to the decision, directives from external leadership (deans, provosts, etc.), and budget constraints. For instance, when a chair was told personal information from a faculty member regarding an illness in their family, committee reassignments had to be made to assist this faculty member in decreasing their workload for that semester. The chair did not want to break the confidentiality the faculty member asked for, so the chair had to make service reassignments without being able to offer a full explanation as to the reasoning for the reassignments. One chair also reported having to make a seemingly difficult, unpopular decision following an incident between two faculty members that resulted in their school's Human Resources team needing to be involved.

Another area where chairs had to make decisions unilaterally was in situations that involved “keeping a department of peaceful coexistence and a good amount of mutual respect,” as one chair described. This same chair described having to set limits on what type of faculty-wide discussions occurred over email. This decision stemmed from multiple disagreements over email and resulted in contentious, unproductive dialogues in which problems were only exacerbated, up to the point where the ombudsman had to help mediate the conflict that started over a group email. The chair did not give examples of the types of disagreements that occurred over email. However, the chair said the decision to limit these email discussions helped improve department culture. Similarly, another chair instituted Robert's Rules of Order during faculty

meetings to ensure that all voices and opinions could be heard respectfully and efficiently. The chair then noted that even within the implementation of Robert's Rules, some discretion around the rules was needed to maintain order but not restrict the conversation: "As the leader of a meeting, I have to be savvy about when to use them strictly, and when to use them softly." This chair discussed using Robert's Rules more strictly when he sensed more tension about a topic. This helped to maintain order and prevent others from talking over one another or interrupting. Similarly, this chair chose to apply Robert's Rules "softly" in less contentious meetings. The chair indicated that the soft application of the rules allowed more free-flowing discussions between faculty members. Through their discretionary application of Robert's Rules, the chair helped maintain order during difficult conversations, which allowed for healthier, more inclusive discussions.

Meetings. All chairs mentioned that it was their responsibility to set the agenda for faculty meetings. All chairs held at least one faculty meeting per semester, and three used their discretion to hold monthly faculty meetings. Two chairs used their discretion to extend invitations to adjunct faculty to attend these meetings. One of these chairs also proactively reached out to faculty asking for agenda items to collaborate on setting the agenda for the meeting, thinking of the chair's role as more of a facilitator of the meeting rather than leading it.

Four chairs proactively attempted to meet individually with each department member. The fifth chair mentioned their goal for the current academic year was to initiate individual meetings with faculty members each semester. Three chairs said they have an open-door policy where faculty could freely stop by their offices for informal or

impromptu meetings. These three chairs also discussed that the discretionary choice of when and how often to have meetings had an impact on the culture of their department.

Hiring. Regarding the hiring process, the chairs had varying levels of authority and chose to utilize their discretion in different ways. Two chairs were responsible for creating position descriptions to be advertised. All chairs discussed their responsibility to share position descriptions with various listservs and professional organizations to attract candidates. Two chairs encouraged faculty to share the descriptions broadly through social media and personal networks. These chairs also encouraged faculty to connect with graduate students at conferences and personally share the position descriptions with those students. One of the two went on to say that they worked to implement a culture of “constant recruitment,” meaning that even if the department was not currently hiring, the department should work to reach out to graduate students and faculty at conferences to let them know the department would be interested in having them apply for future positions. This chair indicated this approach was critical in attracting underrepresented faculty at professional organizations centered around affinity groups, even if there is no current open position. The chair said, “What really matters is being involved in the communities. So they know about you already, they already know that next year, you probably are going to have a position available...and this is not the first year that we have been engaging in the communities where these candidates are.” The other chair shared a similar approach “we were talking with people who would be interested in the position. And that also goes for existing faculty at other places, talking to them, emailing, or giving them a call saying, “Hey, are you thinking

about a change?” So it was shifted from let me drop this ad in The Chronicle, and it became a much more personal touch.”

Four chairs all expressed utilizing their discretion to form search committees. These chairs discussed carefully selecting who would staff search committees. Faculty workload considerations were taken into account, but the importance of choosing a committee chair with solid communication skills and a deep understanding of diversity issues was also discussed. Three of these chairs mentioned that the dean had final hiring approval, whereas one chair from the sample of five held the authority and discretion to make hiring decisions for their department. Whether it is during the recruitment or hiring process, chairs have significant discretion in the search process (Hunt & Jones, 2015). Table 4 details the various roles the individual chairs in this study played in the hiring process.

Table 4

Chairs' Roles in Hiring

Department	Chair created a culture of constant recruitment	Chair created job descriptions	Chair involved faculty in creating job descriptions	Chair had discretion in selecting search committee members	Final hiring authority (Chair or Dean)
Dept. 1					Dean
Dept. 2				X	Dean
Dept. 3	X	X	X	X	Dean
Dept. 4		X		X	Dean
Dept. 5	X		X	X	Chair

Advocating. When three chairs presented final candidates to their deans, they discussed having to ‘choose their battles’ to ensure their (and their department’s)

concerns were heard by their deans. By strongly advocating for their departments' needs, chairs navigated tensions that are created when their faculty's choices differ from the dean's. These three chairs discussed the importance of recognizing which battles they thought they could win and advocating strongly in those instances, rather than creating tense situations where they would likely not gain any ground against the dean. One of the three referred to this as 'fighting':

You have to fight, and I am not a good fighter...I am very realistic about what we might fight for and lose. You know, and maybe that is defensiveness, and I could be wrong, but I see very little people at my level in the school fighting and winning. And it often becomes, they get less support. And you create frictions that do not help you get what you need.

One chair shared an example of having to choose between agreeing with the department search committee or the dean. This chair chose to advocate for the department's concern regarding the dean's selected candidate's lack of research qualifications. The chair pointed out that hiring this individual would put an additional strain on departmental faculty to help support this candidate as a faculty member. Because of the chair's advocacy, the dean was convinced a different candidate would be better for their department. In choosing which battles they will advocate for, internal or external to their departments, chairs utilize their discretion to influence decisions that impact their departments (Carrington, 2005).

While department chair participants were hesitant to directly discuss the amount of authority and discretion they have in their role, their responses to interview questions revealed many ways that they exercise their discretion. Throughout my discussions with

the chairs, it was evident that four of the chairs did not recognize that the little decisions they made between the big ones were examples of how they utilized their discretion. The fifth chair recognized this in saying they exerted their discretion through “thousands of decisions, conversations, and encouragements” that helped facilitate their goals for the department.

Choosing democratic leadership, setting and leading department meetings, implementing recruitment practices, forming search committees, and choosing when to advocate for their department needs, these chairs use discretion in each instance (Lipsky, 2010). They may see these decisions as easy or straightforward solutions, but that might not be the case for another chair in a different department with a varying leadership style. These seemingly small discretionary choices compound over time to have significant effects (Lipsky, 2010).

Research question 2: How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?

During their interviews, chairs were asked questions about their department diversity goals. Their responses revealed goals internal to themselves and their department. External goals related to their school/university and their department’s field also played a role in their goal setting. Conversations around these goals revealed many professional and personal motivations related to their diversity goals.

Goals for Diversity.

It became very clear that as a department, our students were one of the most diverse departments. And so, our motto, if you will, was how does the

faculty represent the diversity of the students? How can the students see themselves in us? And how do we balance that harmony and support it?

Each department chair indicated that their department had goals for diversity in some form or another. For the most part, these goals were implicit. All chairs interviewed reported an aspiration from their faculty to increase diversity. Despite the desire for diversity, few chairs or departments created a framework of action to increase diversity. "It has always been an important component of the department," a chair responded when asked about their department's goals to diversify the faculty. The chair continued, "I think the department has always been sensitive about having as diverse of a faculty...we were sort of trying our best to take advantage of the best opportunities that came along the way. And I think we did a really good job of that. So diversity is always on our mind." Department chairs were able to use these implicit department goals to guide their diversity work even if they did not create explicit, strategic diversity goals or plans.

Similarly, another chair described their department: "Everybody is in some way or another pro-diversity, but people have different views on what that means. And to what extent should we prioritize diversity when thinking about all of the other considerations?" This chair described one of these "other considerations" when recalling a time when there were two final candidates for a position in their department; one candidate was white, and the other was a person of color. The department needed someone to teach within a specific concentration area, and the white candidate had more expertise. The chair remembered some faculty voiced that the white candidate brought diverse thoughts and ideas to the department that they were currently missing. Others thought

the person of color would add more aspects of diversity regardless of their research background. These different interpretations of diversity amongst department faculty would have been cleared up if a concrete goal with definitive diversity aims had been established before the search. While some goals may not have been explicitly stated or written, departments utilized their existing departmental ethos towards diversity to make change. Defined, specific, and measurable diversity goals, in addition to the departmental ethos, would provide a better foundation for concerted change to occur in the direction the department feels it needs—whether that be in diversity of thought or race/background. Chairs can use their department ethos to support and propel their own diversity goals.

Personal Goals and Actions for Diversity. Not all chairs were completely closed off from talking about their specific goals. Three chairs reported having and acting on explicit diversity goals. One chair stated that increasing their department's diversity was their goal before stepping into the role. This chair shared their perspective towards how an increase in faculty diversity was beneficial by saying diversity was important “not from the point of view that this is good for us as our department or VCU, but this is good for the field, this is good for the country.” They went on to describe their own hiring negotiation process with their dean, during which they advocated for the ability to grow the department: “I was fortunate in my hiring that I had negotiated a lot of hires. It is one of the things I wanted; you will not bring me in to push papers, right? Either we are going to build something or not. And so the dean agreed to that.” This chair intimated that this was a crucial part of their ability to diversify the department as the additional faculty lines created more space for diverse faculty to join the department.

Similarly, another chair discussed how they utilized their role to achieve specific diversity gains. As part of their role, this chair was responsible for hiring adjunct faculty, and they hired the department's first Black adjunct faculty member. The chair described the absence of Black adjunct faculty as "embarrassing." This chair also increased their department's diversity using a "waiver hire." Waiver hires occur when a department needs to fill a faculty position quickly. These opportunities usually come about after the sudden loss of a departmental faculty member and are time-limited. In this department, a long-time faculty member's retirement allowed for the waiver to occur. The chair obtained their dean's approval for a waiver hire to fill the vacancy for one year until a national search could be done. Through this waiver hire, "I brought in someone I had known for a very long time... who is African American and is a powerhouse. And we are so lucky to have them." The chair described the great work of the faculty brought on through the waiver hire, which grew their one-year appointment to a three-year appointment. Opportunities like waiver hires allow the department chair to have direct influence over the hiring process and the diversity of their department.

External Goals and Actions for Diversity. One department chair reported on external diversity goals that impacted their unit. This chair explained that their school's accrediting body required that departmental faculty be "representative of the student population." This chair said, "It was something that became a major focus of our dean, and all the chairs had to respond with what we were going to do to increase the underrepresented minority representation of our faculty. And so that it became formalized at that point." Because this became a significant focus of the dean, the chair expressed feeling "micromanaged" throughout the hiring process by their dean. The

chair thought it was uncommon for a dean to take such a hands-on approach in the hiring process, to the extent that the dean crafted the position description themselves. The chair said that their dean's diversity goals for the school were geared explicitly towards underrepresented minorities and that the micromanagement was used to ensure all hiring throughout the school focused on recruiting underrepresented minority candidates.

In addition to the external goals set by their accrediting body and their dean, this chair took advantage of university initiatives focused on increasing faculty diversity at the university. This chair participated in a diversity initiative called iCubed, or the Institution for Inquiry, Inclusion, and Innovation, which is an institute at VCU with four goals:

1. Broadening access to education for students of diverse backgrounds.
2. Creating an inclusive environment for diverse faculty.
3. Being a catalyst for connections within the university community and with the community at large.
4. Fostering innovative research and solutions to societal problems across boundaries. (Virginia Commonwealth University, *iCubed* 2023)

iCubed aims to accomplish these goals through four programs:

1. The Cluster Hiring Initiative and Program aims to recruit diverse faculty to promote transdisciplinary collaboration across departments to find solutions to problems facing urban areas.

2. The Pathway to the Professoriate Program creates relationships between VCU and minority-serving institutions, resulting in a pipeline for diverse scholars to join the university.
3. The Visiting Faculty Scholars Program allows diverse scholars to explore topics related to class, culture, and race.
4. The Commonwealth Scholars Program recruits talented first-year students from diverse backgrounds to participate in applied, community-based research during their time as undergraduate students. (Virginia Commonwealth University, *iCubed* 2023)

This chair recalled opting into the iCubed project, which resulted in hiring an underrepresented faculty member to share a faculty line between their department and a department in another school at VCU. The chair found a way to use institutional resources through iCubed to achieve both school and department diversity goals.

Whether their goals were set personally or externally, each chair had unique goals for departmental diversity. Chairs were creative in their methods for increasing diversity. They used position negotiations, waiver hires, and university resources like iCubed to accomplish their goals. In these examples, the chairs exerted a certain level of discretion, authority, and leadership. None of these tactics were unintentional; these were specific choices to impact their departments' diversity (Kakabadse et al., 2009). While many of these decisions may seem small and separate from one another, when viewed from a macro level, it becomes clear that these small decisions add up over time to produce significant change (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2019).

Research question 3: How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for an inclusive department culture?

People come first, the profession comes second, and the institution comes third- A department chair's reflection on their inclusive goals.

When asked about the culture of their departments, all the department chairs commented on the uniqueness of their departments. They described their departments as a place where "we enjoy coming to work," "we all get along," and we are "very collaborative." Four chairs reported feeling their department's academic discipline played a significant role in setting the culture. Of those four chairs, two recognized the inherently interdisciplinary nature of their field as one requiring collaboration. The third spoke about their field of study requiring them to interact with people from all cultures and backgrounds, so inclusivity was a de facto tentpole for their faculty. The fourth chair of this group described their discipline as being solution-oriented and that working in groups was pivotal to the field. This reflective view of how the academic discipline shaped the department culture stemmed from each discipline's need for collaboration and interaction with other people (faculty or otherwise). This was the central theme immediately brought up by the chairs when asked about their department's culture. All four of these chairs were quick to point to factors external to themselves that helped create a healthy towards inclusion. One chair stated they were "fortunate to have inherited a very strong and open culture." Two other chairs spoke about how their department's interdisciplinary curriculum forced faculty to work closely with one another to best prepare students for their careers after graduation. While chairs may not have

been readily willing to take credit for these outcomes, as the leaders of their departments, they are responsible for maintaining the culture (Schein, 2010). The decisions they make have an impact on whether or not those healthy aspects of their organizational culture continue to persist. The chairs implemented multiple practices across their departments that influenced the department culture. These included formal and informal meetings, transparency and trust, and a people-centered approach.

Formal and Informal Meetings. All five chairs reported having scheduled meetings with the entire department faculty throughout the academic year. While these meetings were more formal and focused on disseminating information, the chairs reported having additional informal meetings with their faculty members that were more personally oriented. One chair said these informal meetings were “about life stuff...not only talking about their professional goals, but the life stuff that happened was discussed in those meetings”. This chair said these meetings were the spaces in which they would find out about pregnancies, health issues, deaths of family members, and the other ways in which faculty might be struggling outside of work. When another chair reflected on their informal meetings with faculty, they said, “You know, you have to keep a full box of Kleenex in the office because you never know what the day is going to be like.” The same chair described the need for these informal meetings as a place to hold space for all the “stuff that happens in people’s lives.” Three of the five chairs discussed the importance of being aware of the “life stuff” occurring in their department, feeling that it helped contribute to their ability to provide for the needs of their faculty. These unstructured meeting opportunities provided faculty with the ability to share information with their chair in a confidential setting. Chairs reported this helped build relationships

with their faculty members. A third chair recalled having a complicated relationship with one faculty member. To improve the relationship, this chair purposefully created more opportunities to engage with this faculty member in an informal context. Over time, the chair reported that these informal meetings helped improve communication and the relationship overall.

Transparency and Trust.

Chairs were getting directives from senior leadership in the school...that I did not agree with. And so I was honest about those things with my faculty and senior leadership started to get more upset with me, because I was not following the company policy. You would think some of that would be embraced. It was not like I was being rebellious. You know, it was really thinking critically about the culture of the school and about the culture in my department. And my department had started to really mistrust senior leadership. – A chair describing the culture of trust and transparency in their department.

All five chairs spoke to valuing transparency as a tenant of their leadership style. One chair posited that “being transparent with faculty and with students...and really listening and letting them be a part of those discussions and helping to explain to them why decisions are being made by the department or why I am encouraging certain things is the key.” Three chairs mentioned feeling a sense of responsibility to provide transparency to their faculty, even when that might go against the wishes of upper administration. One of these chairs spoke specifically about tensions that arose from the feedback they received from their dean’s office regarding the amount of information that

had been shared with their faculty. This chair conveyed that it was essential to the culture of their department and their school that information be shared openly to allow all voices to be heard before decision-making occurs. Another of these chairs similarly shared that their faculty requested more transparency regarding the department's budget. The chair indicated they were okay with bringing more people into budget discussions because it provided an opportunity for more conversation about how the department could be more strategic with its priorities. All chairs reported that increased transparency within their departments increased positive departmental culture where more faculty became engaged.

Three chairs discussed the importance of trust between the chair and their faculty. When discussing feelings of trust between themselves and their faculty, a chair said, "They trust in me. And so when you have the trust of a department, it is not like you can just go do anything. But they trust in my perception of things." All three of these chairs expressed that it was essential to maintain this level of trust. One chair spoke about times when they had to make unpopular decisions on behalf of the department. In these cases, this chair asserted that relying on open, transparent conversations about the decision was vital in maintaining trust while making difficult decisions. On the flip side, a different chair reflected on the importance of the chair's ability to trust their faculty when it comes to decision-making: "You have to entrust your faculty, even if they are making a decision that I do not think is the best one in the long term. It is best to stick with what they are saying unless you see something really egregious that they are missing." This chair conveyed their role as being that of a facilitator of department-wide faculty goals and, therefore, had to balance their own goals and desires against those of

the larger department. When this chair first stepped into their role, they led a charge to collaborate with faculty to revamp the department's bylaws to define the department chair role better. This chair wanted to legitimize the idea that "the chair is acting on the authority given to them by the people who are in the department." To do this, the department edited its bylaws to specify the instances and areas where faculty votes should occur and created a methodology for how those votes should occur. This chair said these changes were meant to "give voice and power to our faculty at different levels and to make chair position not be a king." The chair described that trust was essential to the department chair's authority as faculty needed to know that the chair was working in their best interests. This department's bylaws acted as a quasi-social contract that both faculty and the chair could rely upon to govern the department.

Throughout conversations and interviews with chairs, transparency, and trust complemented one another. Chairs implied that having and giving information freely between themselves and their faculty helped to preserve a healthy department culture towards inclusion. One chair reflected on this by saying, "I wish I had all the information. I tried to tell people, I can only know about these problems, if you tell me. Sometimes they come to me too late, and by that point, it is just conflict management rather than problem-solving." The more transparency and trust within departments, between chairs and faculty, the more inclusive the department can become. As this chair mentioned, if a chair is not aware of a problem, they cannot do much to help solve it.

People-Centered Approach.

It is a place that does focus on us as people, not as pieces of data or statistics. (Department chair)

In discussing the culture of inclusion, all chairs in the study recognized the importance of viewing departmental faculty as holistic people. Chairs spoke about the need to support their faculty fully. Whether in relation to their departmental duties or their lives outside of work, chairs expressed an interest in supporting faculty. When asked about their leadership role within the department, a chair responded, "I have to say, my intention is to support the individual." This chair then expressed that understanding who faculty were as individuals was essential to understanding their needs and how the chair could best support them. One department member discussed a time when a faculty member had to begin routine treatments for an ailment. Through that discussion, the chair provided some administrative support that allowed the faculty member to still teach their courses that semester. In this same vein, when discussing the chair role, a different chair shared, "It is really listening to people and finding out what matters. And how I help them with that process and prove to them that I am genuine with them, this is what they are going to get, and I am going to fight for them and talk with them. If it is unreasonable, we are going to talk it out. It can sound unreasonable first, and maybe it is not unreasonable." This chair then spoke explicitly about how a faculty member's request may initially sound unreasonable. However, once they met with the faculty member and gained more information about the request, it became clear the additional personal factors shared by the faculty member made the request quite reasonable. Had this chair not been open to listening to the faculty member's request and reasoning, they may have caused more undue professional and

personal burden on the faculty member. A third chair reported that “stuff happens in people's lives...you have to find flexibility in work schedule to support people when they really need it.” This chair specifically mentioned the need to reduce a faculty member’s teaching load during a semester when personal circumstances required their attention elsewhere. By creating an environment in which faculty members feel comfortable informing their chair about professional and emotional issues, chairs can help ensure that no one is suffering in silence and that everyone gets the support they need (O’Meara, 2014).

When discussing the culture of inclusion in their department, three chairs brought up the importance of mentorship. These chairs actively encouraged a culture of mentorship within their departments to support individual faculty members. One of the three reflected on this by saying, “One of the things we focused on was mentorship. We did not want to invest our time and money on people that were going to fail. We hired people for a reason, we believe in them. And so it is our duty to help people through [mentorship] so that they can be successful.” The chair continued, “Mentoring faculty is the most important thing an institution could do. It comes around to benefit them more strongly than any other approach.” A second chair from this group of three also shared a story where a faculty member had been suddenly thrust into a program coordinator role that they had never done before. The chair wanted to support the individual, so the chair “encouraged the [department faculty] to support that person, because maybe those faculty had done the role before, and had some insight into it.” Taking on this active role of encouraging mentorship, whether formal or informal, allows faculty to connect with each other and provide support across the department’s community

(Jochum, 2022). The third chair reflected on how the culture of mentorship in their department seemingly made the chair role easier. When talking about department and school service requirements, they posited, “There are people who do it so much better than I do, and I am more often than not approving of what they can do, or maybe offering a little bit of input, but I am just excited when they run with it. Everybody does different kinds of service, internally and externally, based on their connections based on their various fields.” By drawing on individual faculty members’ strengths, this chair was able to assign service roles in a way that aimed to develop faculty members professionally and provided them with an enjoyable service role that made sense with their career trajectory.

These people-centered approaches exemplified by the chairs in this study help to create an inclusive department culture. However, none of the department chairs took complete responsibility for the organizational culture of their departments. The majority thought impacting department culture was outside of their authority due to the complexity of variables that affect culture. When asked about the impact of their authority on department culture, a chair said:

It is hard for me to think of [my impact on department culture] in terms of decisions and authority. Because, if you have built the culture, you have done it by a million little decisions and conversations, and many, many actions in terms of involvement and engagement, and encouraging people to get out of their office and do things

As this chair points out, it is in these little micro-decisions, conversations, and opportunities for involvement and engagement that chairs can influence their

department's culture (Jochum, 2022). Through the recognition of these minor points of discretion, chairs can take action to create a culture of inclusion within their departments (Byztydzienski et al., 2016).

Research question 4: What challenges did department chairs encounter when working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?

When asked about challenges they encountered when working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive environment, the group of chairs reflected upon the question in two formats: external and internal. External challenges refer to challenges imposed outside of the department, while internal challenges occur inside the department or inside the chair themselves. All chairs reported encountering challenges in one or both areas.

External Challenges. Regarding external challenges, chairs dealt with institutional, political, budgetary, and systemic obstacles to cultivating a diverse and inclusive department. The central theme that arose in discussions about challenges dealt with school and university administration, specifically challenges in hiring and with the scope of the department chair role.

When it came to hiring, the chairs reported several ways in which the school or university disrupted their efforts. One chair spoke about a disagreement between their school's definition of diversity and their department's understanding of diversity. "It became very clear from our dean that diversity would only mean underrepresented minority groups. And... we have faculty who identify as gay, lesbian, and non-binary.

And that was not accounted for.” This incongruence caused strife between the dean and the department. The chair expressed feeling that their department’s efforts to grow diversity in some of these other populations had become minimized or trivialized as unimportant to the school or university’s goals. When the department and school’s goals did not fully align, it was challenging for this chair to navigate the tensions between their faculty and the dean.

Another area within hiring in which department chairs reported challenges was around the school/university’s ability, or willingness, to make competitive offers to diverse candidates. One of the chairs said they wanted “to hire one candidate, who happened to be a Black woman. And she was also interviewing with other schools and getting some offers, which led us to try to compete. And the dean, at the time, did not want to play ball. And one of the reasons why we pushed hard is because this would have added diversity to the department, the college, and the university. And that argument, to the best of my knowledge, was dismissed, or discounted at least.” Another chair recalled a situation where the department had identified a very talented, diverse candidate to hire. However, the candidate required a spousal hire, and the school and university were unwilling to accommodate the request. In speaking about other instances where the school/university refused to make competitive offers, this same chair said, “I can count on more than my two hands instances in which VCU has dropped the ball when we had it.” Lack of willingness or ability to make competitive offers was the most common and frustrating challenge the chairs reported facing. One chair said it “felt like a slap in the face” to have come that far in the hiring process only

to lose a qualified candidate due to lack of a competitive offer.” Four of the five chairs discussed this as the most common challenge to diversifying their department.

Chairs also reported multiple challenges with the chair role itself. Again, these challenges seemed to stem from school/university administration. A chair reported feeling an increased administrative burden in the chair role after their school removed assistant chair positions. “When I stepped into the role as a chair, I was a successful researcher. The dean's office said, you know, we hate taking you away from your research, but you have an assistant chair who is incredible. And now they have taken away the assistant chair positions altogether. So a lot of what that person did, I now do.” They continued to discuss how these additional administrative tasks took away their ability to research, which will have a lasting impact on their overall career trajectory.

Another challenge chairs ran into with the role was lack of authority in some situations. One chair reported feeling powerless in situations where the university created a partnership with an institution in another country that restricted the rights of LGBTQ individuals. A faculty member in this chair's department said this partnership devalued VCU's appreciation of its LGBTQ community members. The chair understood the faculty member's perspective but had no means of effecting change in the university's partnership with this other school due to their lack of power at the chair level. The chair mentioned feeling like the best they could do was listen to the faculty member and report their concerns to the dean's office, but the chair still felt like it was not enough.

Internal Challenges. There is a lot to juggle. So you have to be willing to have balls in the air, but you also have to be willing to drop some balls. And recognize that

balls will drop and crash. You have to sort of sometimes judiciously decide which balls to drop. And sometimes you have to accept that something you cared about just dropped and still be able to move on. - A chair's reflection on the complexity of the chair role.

Several chairs reported internal challenges and struggles when attempting to create a representational, diverse, and culturally inclusive department. One chair discussed how his background as a cis, white man could make it difficult for him to truly understand the full scope of challenges diverse faculty in his department might encounter. Another chair struggled delegating departmental tasks, saying, "I am someone who takes on things sometimes just because I cannot bear the idea of adding one more thing to somebody else's plate." A different chair recalled feeling very self-critical of their decisions, causing them to continually second guess themselves and ruminate on their mistakes. The fourth chair spoke about the mental strain of always having to be conscious of their own reactions to maintain a calm culture in the department. Furthermore, the final chair reflected on how the role required making difficult decisions, and sometimes those decisions would alienate colleagues. These internal struggles and challenges create stress and anxiety within the chair themselves, making the role even more difficult to navigate successfully.

Throughout discussions with the chairs, it became clear that the role of department chair was challenging. Sometimes, it could be administratively and emotionally burdensome; at other times, your hard work might prove futile. But the standout commonality amongst this group was that they all cared. They cared about their faculty, they cared about their school, and they cared about diversity, equity, and

inclusion in academia. It was by no coincidence that their department's diversity grew; it was due to the chairs actively caring and trying to create an environment in which everyone could feel welcome.

Faculty Interviews

Seven faculty members from four departments included in the study were interviewed. Faculty representatives from departments 2, 3, 4, and 5 were interviewed. There were no faculty participants from Department 1. Of the faculty interviewed, three were associate professors, two were assistant professors, one was a visiting professor, and one was an adjunct. The group had an average of 7.5 years of affiliation with their department, with the shortest affiliation being two years and the longest being sixteen. During the interviews, faculty participants reflected on their interactions with their chair and their perceptions of the changes in their departments that led to increased diversity and culture of inclusion. These interviews revealed additional context and perspectives on the department chair's role.

Chair's Discretion and Authority

Faculty members discussed a variety of decisions that department chairs made that impacted the diversity of their departments. Several faculty participants specifically expressed instances in which the chair played a direct role in their own hiring process. One faculty member recalled the chair reaching out directly and encouraging them to apply for their position. Three discussed their chair's use of a waiver or emergency hire to diversify their departments directly. One of these three faculty members recalled about the waiver hire: "The Chair brought it to faculty and said, I am going to do this. That was definitely his initiative and his call, and we were all supportive of it."

In addition to waiver and emergency hires, faculty participants also discussed the impact of department chairs on the search process. One theme that was brought up was search committees and the search process. When choosing the search committee members, a faculty member said, "I think sometimes we need to be more careful about who we are letting represent the face of the department." They further said, "It is not just finding people to apply; you have to convince them that this is the place they want to be. Part of that is always money. And that is where I think we have primarily failed. But part of that has got to be like reading the rooms and knowing who the best representatives of your department are." Having an active and engaged department that fully participates in the search process can help potential faculty members better understand the culture of the department they might be stepping into.

Another faculty participant shared a similar sentiment when reflecting on how their department had succeeded in its diversification efforts. They shared that their chair had actively encouraged all department members to engage in the search process, whether it was in giving a tour around campus, picking the candidate up from the airport, having lunch with the candidate, or attending the candidate's lecture. Through this encouragement, this faculty member said their chair created an expectation of participation so that the candidate would get a better understanding of the entire department. This faculty member specifically mentioned utilizing these interactions to discuss the Richmond community, public school systems, and any other topics candidates may be interested in learning about outside the job requirements. This holistic approach to searches provides candidates with more interactions that allow

them to learn about the department's culture from various department members rather than the select few on the search committee.

Department Diversity Goals

Faculty participants differed in their perceptions of how diversity goals were set. Three faculty members said their Chairs did not play a role in developing the goal to diversify faculty. These faculty members thought that departmental faculty drove any goals for diversification. One of these faculty said, "I do not think much of it comes from the department chair; I think our program faculty are really focused on diversity. So, we internally kind of start those conversations often. Maybe if we did not, the department chair would have a bigger role in that. But that has not really been the case for us." This response is similar to all five department chairs who described their department as having implicit diversity goals.

Conversely, two faculty stated that their chairs had set diversity goals and effectively communicated them to the department. One of these faculty members said their chair "has worked hard to make that happen. And the stars have aligned in many ways." The other faculty member described their chair's goal of diversification by saying:

We have done a good job growing our diversity within our department.

And I think it does come from the chair empowering our department because when [the chair] empowers us, I think you open the door to get people to see that we are an inclusive environment. We recognize everybody for their differences, no matter where they are academically, culturally, or gender. Our chair put a lot of this into place.

Regardless of who set or implemented the diversity goals, all faculty interviewed signified that their departments had goals for diversification.

Department Inclusion Goals

Once people are hired, it is really very much on the department chair who sets the tone and culture and create a safe and welcoming environment –

A faculty member said about the culture of inclusion in their department.

All faculty interviewed reported feeling included in their departments. However, five faculty participants plainly stated that they could only speak on their behalf and not on behalf of their colleagues. Similar to chair responses, these faculty said that much of the inclusion in their units was due to the inclusive nature of their academic fields. “We are a Social Science department, so people in the department are at least aware of issues of race, issues of religion, issues of things that can cause division or power differentials. And so, because of our overall awareness, I like to think we are rather conscientious about these issues,” said one faculty member about their department. Two faculty members from the same department reported having a mostly inclusive environment but also mentioned a division between their faculty. One of these faculty members reported this division as being generation-based. They said, “There is a lot of generational divide, and ... both sides probably feel like the chair is not listening enough to them.” This same faculty member described the history of their department and how this generational divide occurred. According to this faculty member, there was a sudden and significant increase in undergraduate majors in their department, which created several new faculty lines. Before creating these lines, the department had been unable to hire for quite some time. The faculty member recognized that these new lines made

the department's diversification possible and were an overall benefit to the department, even if they did create division between the longstanding cohort of faculty and the new hires. The new hires brought in new ideas, methodological approaches, and teaching styles that caused incongruence with the existing faculty in the department, causing the two groups to isolate themselves. "But that is definitely something that plays a role in the culture and being able to navigate those differences, particularly in a Social Science department, where it is so broad that you can have individuals from many different backgrounds."

Every faculty member in the study reported interacting with their department chair weekly, primarily in informal settings. Like department chairs, faculty mentioned these hallway chats, text messages, and impromptu office meetings provided opportunities to discuss projects, concerns, and "life stuff" (as one of the chairs put it). A faculty member expressed that their department's weekly Tea Times allowed all faculty to participate in informal settings with each other. These Tea Times gave faculty a chance to connect outside of formalized settings. The faculty member described, "One of the other things that has been really good for our department is something called a Teatime...on Fridays, for an hour and a half, we have coffee and tea and play games and people talking about research, and we invite our grad students. We used to do it only once a week; we now do it twice weekly. And now it has become this very social hour." The faculty member described these tea times as a structured, but not forced, opportunity for faculty to engage with one another. When speaking about their chair's role in implementing Teatime, they said, "I hate to use the word forced, but our chair

brought us together and made us recognize that we each have something to offer... And that together, we can do more. I think our chair brought that to us.”

Again, transparency and trust were shared values of inclusion between the chair and faculty participants. One faculty member shared about their chair’s transparency: “Everything is on the table to discuss. My chair often says, ‘I do not think I am supposed to be telling you this, but I think it is important.’ Yeah, there is a huge level of openness and transparency. And our chair very often airs his frustrations with the dean’s office, with sharing the middle management kind of woes, and I think we all appreciate that.”

Another faculty member recalled a similar instance of their chair being transparent with tensions and frustrations within their school related to women faculty feeling like their concerns were not heard by the dean’s office; however, changes were made when the male chair brought the same concerns to the dean’s office. This faculty member said, “Our chair put the elephant in the room and was like, ‘I recognize that this could easily be because of my gender. And I am sure that is really frustrating.’ And so I feel like it is really helpful that he was able to put this on the table and talk about this messed up situation.” The faculty member appreciated their chair recognizing the efforts of women in the department being unrecognized by the dean, and that when a man makes the same request, the man’s social capital may have been the only difference that caused the dean to listen and respond to the concern.

A third faculty member recalled the evolution of trust they felt with their chair during their time with the department. This faculty member shared that they are term faculty and that when they started with the department, they did not feel they were as valued as tenured faculty and would often stay quiet in departmental meetings.

However, they began recognizing their chair's authenticity and became more comfortable speaking up. "They gave me a voice...I am not tenured...and I feel like I have a voice, and I think the department as a whole, we all feel we have a voice much more than we did in the past." By recognizing and calling out the power dynamics in the department, whether between men and women, or between tenured, term, and adjunct appointments, chairs can let faculty know they are aware of the power differentials and actively work with faculty to create more inclusive practices.

Challenges to Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Department

Faculty reported several challenges faced in working towards a diverse and inclusive department. The resounding challenges presented were those posed by the university, particularly around the ability to hire and make competitive offers to candidates. When asked about challenges, a faculty member said, "The two biggest are just being told no to the search in the first place and then being told no to the negotiation request." Four other faculty members shared these as the two most significant barriers to departmental diversification efforts. One of these faculty members described the dichotomy between the university's emphasis on faculty diversity and departmental efforts: "What we hear from the university is always 'we want you to diversify, we expect you to diversify.' And what we always say is, yeah, we want to, but are you willing to pony up the money to allow us to do that? And the answer is always no."

The department chairs shared these two challenges as well. Another faculty member said, "If we do not have a hire to make, then nothing changes, so it is definitely hugely tied to if we are able to hire someone." These systematic challenges left faculty feeling

let down by university administrators. Faculty participants recognized these challenges were beyond the role of the chair to solve but appreciated the efforts their chairs made to advocate for new hires and competitive offers.

Summary of Faculty Interviews

Examples provided by faculty members give insight into how decisions made by department chairs, deliberately or inadvertently, impact their department's organizational culture. Through conscious efforts, department chairs can influence the level at which individuals feel included in the department. For example, chairs can create an engaging search process that gives all faculty members a chance to participate in the search, yielding a more inclusive experience for current and prospective faculty. By building a culture of transparency and trust, chairs can establish a supportive relationship with faculty in which faculty feel safe to share personal matters that may be impacting their work. Chairs can impact how faculty engage with one another professionally and personally. For instance, by providing time and space, like the aforementioned 'Teatime,' for informal conversations to occur, chairs can help create connections with and between department faculty. By having open and honest conversations about tensions in the department, chairs can draw attention to issues that might not be obvious to everyone; this can create an opportunity to validate faculty with less sociopolitical power and give them a voice at the table. As more individuals begin to feel included, the department as a whole will become more inclusive, giving more people a seat at the table to take part in the decisions that will impact the department and their careers (O'Meara, 2014).

Summary of Results

The data collected in the study revealed various ways in which chairs influence their departments. Interviews with chairs and faculty members yielded concrete examples of how explicit decisions made by department chairs impacted the diversity and inclusion of their departments, including:

- Taking a democratic leadership approach.
- Creating communication expectations through the use of something like Robert's Rules of Order.
- Inviting adjunct faculty and department staff to regularly scheduled department meetings.
- Being open to having impromptu, informal meetings with department members.
- Broadly sharing job ads and encouraging faculty to personally share job ads directly through email, social media, or even phone calls to potential applicants within their networks.
- Having regular individual and department wide meetings.
- Creating a culture of constant recruitment, even when not currently hiring.
- Strategically and consistently advocating on behalf of their department to school administration.
- Setting clear, strategic, measurable, and defined diversity goals for their department.
- Working with deans and other university administrators to create school and university diversity goals that support departmental goals.

- Utilizing diversity research and concepts from their academic discipline to start conversations about departmental diversity goals.
- Using waiver or emergency hires to benefit diversity goals when the opportunity arose.
- Hiring diverse adjunct faculty, who might move into a full-time position in the future.
- Being strategic when forming search committees, by including faculty members who have a deep understanding the department's diversity goals.
- Creating an expectation that all faculty participate in the search process during on-campus interviews.
- Taking advantage of university diversity initiatives.
- Using inclusive and collaborative concepts from their academic field to propel inclusive practices in their departments.
- Taking ownership of their leadership position's authority and its role in setting and perpetuating organizational culture.
- Provide space for informal conversations to occur with and between department members.
- Being as transparent as possible and building a sense of trust with department faculty.
- Review departmental bylaws to define and communicate the chair's role and responsibilities and establish aspects of shared governance between the chair and faculty.

- Taking a person-centered approach that supports faculty professionally and personally.
- Creating equity in service assignments by utilizing the individual strengths of faculty members and balancing those with their differing career trajectories.

While chairs may not have taken all the credit for their choices that led to diversity and inclusion gains, they were responsible for making those decisions that ultimately supported diversity and inclusion efforts. Results from faculty interviews provided support for many of the results of the chair interviews. The similarities between chair and faculty responses suggest that the efforts of the chairs were not unnoticed by faculty, with some faculty members directly stating that the chair was responsible for the level of diversity and culture of inclusion in their departments. Through their discretion and decision-making, chairs impact their departments' diversity and culture of inclusion.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the chair's role in increasing their department's diversity and inclusiveness. To do this, departments, where diversity growth occurred, were studied to better understand the scope of discretion and authority that department chairs possess to make decisions that impact their units and, in turn, increase department levels of diversity and inclusion. This was done by surveying department chairs, interviewing chairs and department faculty members, and conducting a content analysis of department websites. I explored the chair's role in increasing their department's diversity and inclusiveness. I was guided by 4 questions:

1. How did department chairs describe the scope of their ability to use discretion in their role?
2. How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?
3. How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for an inclusive department culture?
4. What challenges did department chairs encounter when working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?

I identified 23 strategies for increased diversity and inclusion.

Research question 1: How did department chairs describe the scope of their ability to use discretion in their role?

Chair participants described using their discretion in various ways. Chairs often did not recognize how some of the choices they made were acts of discretion. For instance, chairs in the study used their discretion to implement a democratic approach

to making decisions. In doing so, they used their discretion to allow faculty to have a voice in decisions the chair was making. The chairs also described their ability to set and host formal and informal meetings as a way they practiced their discretion. Chairs were not required to set or hold informal meetings, but they chose to because they felt informal meetings improved their ability to do the chair role well. Chair and faculty participants recognized that chairs utilize their discretion across the hiring process; whether it is creating job ads, advertising positions, or forming search committees, chairs' discretion influences the hiring process. Chairs also utilize their discretion in advocating for their department. By choosing when and how they advocate for their departments, chairs can help influence decisions made by external forces like their deans. Chairs exercised their discretion in making major and minor decisions, both of which had an impact on their department.

Research question 2: How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?

Department chairs identified several implicit and explicit goals. Implicit goals are those that are understood communally but never directly stated. Chairs also set personal and shared goals, making known their aim to diversify the department. Some describe how external goals from university, school, or their field of study determine the diversity goals for their departments. Chairs reported that the external goals set by the university, school, or their field were significant to their ability to diversify their departments as they provided support and enhanced the chair's goals. Many of the chairs explain how one or more of these factors played a role in their faculty diversification goals.

Throughout interviews, chairs hesitated to discuss explicit goals they may have set to increase diversity. This may be due to the increased national political discourse around diversity and equity in 2023. On June 29th, 2023 (about six months before the start of interviews), the United States Supreme Court overruled affirmative action in college admission processes. Throughout the fall 2023 semester, VCU worked with faculty and staff to review admissions policies to ensure all university and departmental admissions procedures were current with that ruling. While the Supreme Court's ruling dealt with student admissions, it is not a big leap to imagine that conversations stemming from the ruling increased consternation around diversity, equity, and inclusion on college campuses to include diversity of faculty. One chair mentioned being aware of the legal consequences of hiring based on diversity: "Applications from people from underrepresented minorities were not our sole consideration. Of course, that would be illegal and improper."

Another chair mentioned bringing in a member from their Human Resources team to discuss the legality of considering diversity in hiring to ensure the search committee was aware of those implications. After reassuring participants I would do everything I could to keep their identities confidential, the interviews still had an air of trepidation. I was repeatedly asked during the interviews, 'Are you sure this will remain confidential?' One chair asked me to pause the recording to speak candidly and off the record about diversity issues within their department. The current political climate surrounding diversity in the workforce certainly hindered the chairs' willingness to talk freely about any specific goals they set.

Across departments, I identified ten strategies department chairs used to increase faculty diversity. Although these are common recruitment strategies, chairs discussed their increased importance and use in identifying underrepresented candidates.

1. Broadly sharing job ads and encouraging faculty to personally share job ads directly through email, social media, or phone calls to potential applicants within their networks.
2. Creating a culture of constant recruitment, even when not currently hiring.
3. Setting clear, strategic, measurable, and defined diversity goals for their department.
4. Working with deans and other university administrators to create school and university diversity goals that support departmental goals.
5. Utilizing diversity research and concepts from their academic discipline to start conversations about departmental diversity goals.
6. Using waiver or emergency hires to meet diversity goals when the opportunity arose.
7. Hiring diverse adjunct faculty, who might move into a full-time position in the future.
8. Being strategic when forming search committees, by including faculty members who have a deep understanding the department's diversity goals.
9. Creating an expectation that all faculty participate in the search process during on-campus interviews.
10. Taking advantage of university diversity initiatives.

Research question 3: How did department chairs describe their goals and actions for building and strengthening an inclusive department culture?

Chairs described their goals and actions for developing an inclusive department culture through how their faculty interact with one another. Chairs specifically explained how formal and informal department meetings occur and how professional and personal information is shared in these meetings. Chairs emphasized working towards a transparent and trusting relationship between themselves and their faculty. Finally, chairs described using people-centered approaches to guide their work in the department. Department chairs implemented a range of strategies to create and strengthen an inclusive department culture. Chairs reported taking multiple approaches to creating a more inclusive department, recognizing that department culture is influenced by the many decisions over long periods of time. These strategies and approaches include:

1. Taking a democratic leadership approach.
2. Creating communication expectations using something like Robert's Rules of Order.
3. Inviting adjunct faculty and department staff to regularly scheduled department meetings.
4. Being open to having impromptu, informal meetings with department members.
5. Having regular individual and department-wide meetings.
6. Strategically and consistently advocating for their department to school administration.

7. Using inclusive and collaborative concepts from their academic field to propel inclusive practices in their departments. For instance, if careers in the department's field require students to be able to work collaboratively on projects throughout multiple semesters, chairs can use this as a way to start conversations about how department faculty can collaborate better together to support students' collaborative projects.
8. Taking ownership of their leadership position's authority and its role in setting and perpetuating organizational culture.
9. Providing space for informal conversations to occur with and between department members who might not otherwise have an opportunity to talk with one another.
10. Being as transparent as possible and building trust with department faculty.
11. Review departmental bylaws to define and communicate the chair's role and responsibilities and establish aspects of shared governance between the chair and faculty.
12. Taking a person-centered approach that supports faculty professionally and personally.
13. Creating equity in service assignments by utilizing the individual strengths of faculty members and balancing those with their differing career trajectories.

Research question 4: What challenges did department chairs encounter when working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?

Challenges that department chairs faced in working towards a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department fell into two categories: external challenges

and internal challenges. External challenges were those that fell outside the department's scope; these included institutional, political, budgetary, and systemic challenges. Chairs felt these external challenges were outside the scope of their ability to make meaningful change. Internal challenges refer to challenges that are internal to the department or the chair themselves. These included the administrative burden of the chair role and the stresses and anxieties of the leadership role.

Implications

As of March 1st, 2024, The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that 19 states have introduced legislation restricting diversity statements from being used in hiring or promotion materials. Bills have been introduced in 17 states, limiting colleges and universities from having staff or offices on campus dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Twenty states have introduced legislation preventing colleges and universities from implementing mandated diversity, equity, and inclusion training. In addition, 15 states have proposed bills to eliminate identity-based preferences for hiring or admissions. In total, 81 bills have been introduced, eight have received legislative approval, and another eight have become law (*Dei Legislation Tracker 2024*). These new laws and bills can hinder traditional diversity and inclusion efforts. The implications of this study can provide new methods and approaches that can be used to increase the diversity and inclusion of departments.

The findings have an impact on individual department chairs, colleges and universities, and the larger field of higher education. Through the experiences shared by the department chairs represented in this study, current and future department chairs can learn from the diversity and Inclusion strategies presented by participants. These

stories can help empower individual department chairs to understand better how their role as mid-level managers holds power to change diversity and inclusion. The findings also shed light on the amount of discretion that chairs have and can use to increase diversity and change department culture.

The findings identify topics necessary for effective department chair training and professional development within colleges and universities. Colleges and universities can better position department chairs to attract and retain diverse faculty by providing training to department chairs around their administrative role as well as diversity and inclusion. Through the creation and implementation of formalized department chair training, chairs will be better equipped for all aspects of the chair role. This training should include information on how chairs can effectively recruit new faculty to their departments, including administrative functions of the chair during the search process, effective advertising techniques, and strategies for inclusive campus visits. Creating a population of empowered department chairs who know how to promote diversity and inclusion can shift the field of higher education by creating a more diverse and culturally representative faculty where all faculty members and students feel included.

Department chairs interested in growing the level of diversity and inclusion in their departments can implement the strategies exemplified by the discretionary choices of the department chairs in this study. For instance, chairs looking to grow the culture of diversity in their units should take cues from how their discipline discusses diversity. By framing discussions related to departmental diversity in the context of the department's academic field, chairs can begin facilitating conversations about diversity through an academic lens. As more of these conversations occur and more faculty members begin

to feel comfortable openly discussing diversity, the chair can build more consensus and understanding amongst the department about what their diversity goals should be.

Departments, schools, and universities should align their diversity goals with each other so that the various mechanisms at an institution work in concert with one another toward a similar goal. However, these goals should be flexible enough for individual units to tailor them to meet their department and field's needs. For instance, if a department already has a representative population of underrepresented minority faculty but lacks representation of faculty with disabilities, it should be able to access school and university resources to meet its diversity goals. By keeping these diversity goals flexible and open to all departments, colleges and universities can effectively provide resources to chairs looking to grow their departments' diversity. Through these strategic goals, colleges and universities can better articulate the resources they can utilize in negotiating competitive hires to attract diverse candidates.

Even though chair roles can vary significantly between units, chairs should take ownership of their decisions and implications. By helping chairs recognize their positions' institutional power, they will be better able to understand the scope of repercussions associated with their discretion. Chairs should also work with their faculty to better define the role of the chair in their department. This can be done by creating or overhauling departmental bylaws and creating guidelines around chair authority and shared governance. Formalizing this partnership between the chair and faculty will assist in perpetuating a healthy department culture when chairs transition in or out of the role. Creating or revamping department governing procedures will also allow departments to create departmental mission statements related to diversity and

inclusion. These mission statements should be presented on departmental websites so job candidates can easily access and understand the culture of diversity and inclusion they may be stepping into if hired.

In departments where chairs are responsible for forming search committees, their discretion in determining who sits on the committee can influence the recruitment process. By using their discretion to create effective search committees, chairs can positively influence the experience candidates have during the recruitment process. By ensuring that search committee members are aware and invested in departmental diversity goals, chairs can rely on the committee to consider these goals in their decisions. A chair's understanding of how individual faculty members can participate in the search process to present a welcoming and inclusive department can be an essential determinant of how the candidate perceives the department. In this way, the chair's decisions related to the creation of the search committee have significant repercussions on how diverse job candidates view the department and, therefore, the department's diversity.

Colleges and universities can better equip chairs with the tools needed to serve their departments well by providing practical training for new and continuing department chairs. This could include leadership training that emphasizes creating a culture of transparency and trust in their departments, which could help increase departmental inclusion and create open lines of communication between the chair and their faculty. Through this open communication, chairs can better serve their faculty by being in tune with faculty needs. These open lines of communication can also help chairs facilitate a democratic leadership style where faculty feel they have an active role in the decisions

made in the department. Leadership training around how to navigate challenging conversations would also provide chairs with the ability to ensure conversations remain respectful in their units. Training and resources that encourage chairs to create opportunities for informal meetings and interactions with and between their faculty can help create connections to bolster an inclusive culture. These connections made during informal conversations can help create mentorship opportunities between departmental faculty members, which can help facilitate individual professional growth.

Chairs can also be trained to utilize university and department data reporting to better advocate for their departments. By encouraging chairs to utilize this data, they can make more strategic arguments to deans to support their department's diversity and inclusion goals. Chairs should also receive training on various university tools and technologies that can assist in relieving some of the administrative burdens the role presents. Department chairs with access to effective and efficient training, tools, and technologies will have more bandwidth and ability to respond to their departmental needs, support their faculty, and serve their departments as influential leaders who promote a healthy culture of diversity and inclusion.

Chairs have the power and authority to initiate change in their departments. The duties associated with their role should be clearly defined. Chairs should be compensated appropriately and have a manageable workload. Training and professional development opportunities must be available to chairs that allow them to think critically about their department's future. Empowering department chairs and giving them the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to implement change is a path to creating more diverse, equitable, and inclusive departments. More diverse, equitable,

and inclusive departments create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive colleges and universities. More diverse, equitable, and inclusive universities create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive field of higher education where all students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds can participate.

Limitations and Future Improvements

There are limitations to generalizing the results of this study. I only looked at departments where growth in diversity had already occurred; this could indicate that there were already fewer barriers to diversity in place that were not accounted for in the study. Other insights might be derived by including department chairs who struggle to make gains in diversity. Chairs who struggle with recruiting diverse faculty may help provide more information about challenges and barriers participants in this study may not have faced. This study only looked at departments that successfully recruited underrepresented minority faculty members. This can be improved upon by also examining departments that have also successfully retained underrepresented minority faculty members. Only by understanding the role department chairs can play in the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty members can the full scope of the department chair's role in diversity and inclusion be revealed.

Another limitation of the study is selection bias. Because the Chairs were asked to nominate faculty members for interviews, they could have purposefully chosen faculty members they knew felt included in their departments. This would skew the data, yielding responses that inflated inclusiveness in their department. Future studies may benefit from a randomized approach to participant selection. A randomized approach might allow for more candid responses from a more diverse sample of participants. In

addition to randomization, a mechanism for anonymous participation may also provide more honest responses from faculty participants. Due to the inherent power dynamic between chairs and their faculty, allowing for anonymous participation from faculty members, perhaps through surveys, may create a better sense of security for faculty members who may have more negative thoughts to present about their chair.

The final limitation relates to my position in the institution. Due to my status as a student and an institution employee, an additional power dynamic between chairs and me or between me and faculty may have impacted the study results. Given that I have worked at the institution for over a decade, I have an extensive network of colleagues, and participants may have been aware of possible shared professional connections between them and me. This could have caused some participants to be more reserved in their responses. Future studies in this area would benefit from researchers being external to the institution to help mitigate this.

Conclusion

The study revealed ways department chairs can and do impact the diversity and culture of inclusion in their departments. The study also sheds light on department chairs' varying scope and range of discretion and authority. Department chairs face broad and specific challenges in diversifying and creating a culture of inclusion. Department chairs utilize their creativity, academic background, and administrative discretion to implement change in their departments.

There is still much to learn about the department chair role. Future studies can better understand the role and its impact. This can lead to better methods of selecting candidates for the department chair role by recognizing the knowledge, skills, and

abilities that help make chairs successful. More qualified department chairs can lead to better-functioning departments with higher levels of diversity and healthy cultures of inclusion where all faculty, students, and staff feel welcome.

References

- Babbie, E. R. (2008). *The Basics of Social Research*. Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Bystydzienski, J., Thomas, N., Howe, S., & Desai, A. (2016). The leadership role of college deans and department chairs in academic culture change. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(12), 2301–2315.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1152464>
- Calegari, M. F., Sibley, R. E., & Turner, M. E. (2015). A roadmap for using Kotter's organizational change model to build faculty engagement in accreditation. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 19*(3), 31.
- CARRINGTON, K. (2005). IS THERE A NEED FOR CONTROL? *Public Administration Quarterly, 29*(1/2), 140–161.
- Carter, I. (2021, November 19). *Positive and negative liberty*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/liberty-positive-negative/>
- Castillo-Montoya. (2016). Preparing for Interview Research: The Interview Protocol Refinement Framework. *Qualitative Report, 21*(5), 811–.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2337>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design : choosing among five approaches* (Second edition.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design : choosing among five approaches* (Third edition.). SAGE Publications.
- Domingo, C. R., Gerber, N. C., Harris, D., Mamo, L., Pasion, S. G., Rebanal, R. D., & Rosser, S. V. (2022). More service or more advancement: Institutional barriers to academic success for women and women of color faculty at a large public comprehensive minority-serving State University. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 15*(3), 365–379. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000292>
- Farmer. (2015). *To kill the king : post-traditional governance and bureaucracy*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315698670>
- Frey. (2021). *Organizational Role Conflict: The Lived Experience of the Long-Term Department Chairperson in Higher Education*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Gmelch, Roberts, D., Ward, K., & Hirsch, S. (2017). A Retrospective View of Department Chairs: Lessons Learned. *The Department Chair, 28*(1), 1–4.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/dch.30140>

- Goodall, M., J. M., & Singell, L. D. (2017). Do Economics Departments Improve after They Appoint a Top Scholar as Chairperson? *Kyklos* (Basel), 70(4), 546–564. <https://doi.org/10.1111/kykl.12148>
- Groves, Fowler, F. J., Couper, M. P., Lepkowski, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. (2009). FAQs ABOUT SURVEY METHODOLOGY. In *Survey Methodology* (Vol. 561). John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Halkias. (2022). The multiple case study design : methodology and application for management education. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003244936>
- Hunt & Jones, K. T. (2015). RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF ACCOUNTING FACULTY IN A DIFFICULT MARKET. *Global Perspectives on Accounting Education*, pp. 12, 23–51.
- Igbaria, M., & Wormley, W. M. (1992). Organizational experiences and career success of MIS professionals and managers: An examination of race differences. *MIS Quarterly*, 16(4), 507. <https://doi.org/10.2307/249734>
- Indicator 20: Undergraduate Enrollment*. (2019, February). Nces.ed.gov. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_REB.asp
- Jochum, C. J. (2021). *The Department Chair: A Practical Guide to Effective Leadership*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kakabadse, N. K., Lee-Davies, L., & Kakabadse, A. (2009). Leadership discretion: A developmental experience. *Strategic Change*, 18(3-4), 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jsc.842>
- Kelly, B. T., Gayles, J. G., & Williams, C. D. (2017). Recruitment without retention: A critical case of black faculty unrest. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 86(3), 305–317. <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.3.0305>
- King, S. (2015, November 16). Administration responds to Black Vcu Speaks. *The Commonwealth Times*.
- Krippendorff, K. (2019). *Content analysis*. SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878781>
- Kruse, S. D. (2020). Department chair leadership: Exploring the role's demands and tensions. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 50(5), 739–757. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220953601>

- Keulemans, & Groeneveld, S. (2020). Supervisory leadership at the frontlines: Street-level discretion, supervisor influence, and street-level bureaucrats' attitude towards clients. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 30(2), 307–323. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muz019>
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jacob & Furgerson, S. (2015). Writing Interview Protocols and Conducting Interviews: Tips for Students New to the Field of Qualitative Research. Qualitative Report. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1718>
- Lester, J., & Kezar, A. J. (2011). Understanding the formation, functions, and challenges of grassroots leadership teams. *Innovative Higher Education*, 37(2), 105–124. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-011-9191-y>
- Libresco, L. (2015, December 3). FiveThirtyEight. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/here-are-the-demands-from-students-protesting-racism-at-51-colleges/>
- Lipsky, M. (2010). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Merriam, & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation* (4th ed). Wiley.
- Mills, Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2009). Encyclopedia of Case Study Research. In *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Condition of education*. Condition of Education (COE) Home. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022, May). *The NCES Fast Facts Tool provides quick answers to many education questions (National Center for Education Statistics)*. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61>
- National Science Foundation. (2017). *Women, minorities, and persons with disabilities in science and engineering: 2017*. Retrieved November 10, 2022, from <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21321/report>

- O'Meara, K. A., Louder, A., & Campbell, C. M. (2014). To heaven or hell: Sensemaking about why Faculty Leave. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 85(5), 603–632. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2014.0027>
- O'Meara, K. A., Culpepper, D., & Templeton, L. L. (2020). Nudging toward diversity: Applying behavioral design to faculty hiring. *Review of Educational Research*, 90(3), 311–348. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654320914742>
- O'Sullivan, E., Berner, M., & Rassel, G. R. (2008). *Research methods for public administrators*. Pearson Longman.
- Quest 2015: *Quest for Distinction*. Quest 2015 - Virginia Commonwealth University. (n.d.). <https://quest.vcu.edu/>; archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20150911005816/http://quest.vcu.edu/about/mission/>
- Quest 2025: *Together We Transform*. Quest 2025- Virginia Commonwealth University. (n.d.). <https://quest.vcu.edu/>; archived at - <https://web.archive.org/web/20180523070437/https://quest.vcu.edu/>
- Rao, M. (2020, April 7). *President's Posts*. February 23, 2024, <https://blogs.vcu.edu/president/2020/04/07/covid-19-update-for-april-7/>
- Rhoades. (2020). Taking College Teachers' Working Conditions Seriously: Adjunct Faculty and Negotiating a Labor-based Conception of Quality. *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)*, 91(3), 327–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2019.1664196>
- Rosenbloom, D. H., Kravchuk, R. S., & Clerkin, R. M. (2009). *Public administration: Understanding management, politics, and Law in the public sector*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Twitter. (2019, September). Twitter. Retrieved October 31, 2022, from <http://www.twitter.com/chairmartyr>
- van Manen, J. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, Ontario, Canada: The Althouse Press.
- Virginia Commonwealth University. (2019, May 20). *Department chairs*. The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute 2019. <https://gehli.vcu.edu/programs/department-chairs/>
- Virginia Commonwealth University. (2021, November 12). *2021 rankings*. Office of Institutional Equity, Effectiveness and Success. <https://inclusive.vcu.edu/dashboard/rankings/>

Virginia Commonwealth University iCubed. (2023, June 8). <https://icubed.vcu.edu/>

Walker, B., & Friel, T. (2020). Business School Leadership: An examination of personality and preparation effects on Dean turnover. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, 17(3). <https://doi.org/10.33423/jlae.v17i3.3021>

Weaver, E., K., D., L., & DellAntonio, J. (2019). The Changing Role of the Department Chair in the Shifting Landscape of Higher Education. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 8(4), 175–. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v8n4p175>

White, & Marsh, E. E. (2006). Content Analysis: A Flexible Methodology. *Library Trends*, 55(1), 22–45. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2006.0053>

Wilson. (1887). The Study of Administration. *Political Science Quarterly*, 2(2), 197–222. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2139277>

Appendix A: Department Chair Consent Form

Permission to Take Part in a Human Research Study

ICF version number: Version 3

Title of research study: Department Chairs' Impact on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Their Departments (HM20028341)

Investigator:

Dr. Charol Shakeshaft, Ph.D., Professor, Educational Leadership, VCU School of Education. 804-828-1940

Mr. Nicholas Garcia II, MPA, Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership, VCU School of Education. 540-273-4165

Key Information: The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because your department is one of the few at Virginia Commonwealth University that made gains in faculty diversity between 2017 and 2022.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

University department chairs serve as the leaders of their departments but also as middle managers. While many department chairs see their role as having little authority, they still play an integral role in day-to-day campus operations. As leaders of their departments, chairs can directly influence the department's organizational culture to include the make-up of the faculty. As college student demographics continue to diversify, there are calls for diversity among department faculty. This study investigates the role department chairs can play in diversifying their faculty.

How long will the research take and what will I need to do?

We expect that you will be in this research study for up to three hours total.

You will be asked to complete an electronic survey about your background and the background of your department (30 minutes). You will then be asked to participate in an interview about your experience as department chair (60-75 minutes). Interviews will be conducted virtually through Zoom. I will ask to record this interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, the recording will be deleted. You can opt for your interview not to be recorded.

More detailed information about the study procedures can be found under ***"What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?"***

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

Participation in research might involve some loss of privacy. There is a small risk that someone outside the research study could see and misuse information about you.

Surveys and interviews may contain questions that are personal in nature and that relate to your profession/career. You may refuse to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

More detailed information about the risks of this study can be found under ***“Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? (Detailed Risks)”***

Will being in this study help me in any way?

There are no benefits to you from your taking part in this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include helping understand how department chairs can influence the diversity and inclusion of their departments to better promote a more diverse faculty population.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You can decide to participate, not participate, or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

Detailed Information: The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team: Dr. Charol Shakeshaft (cshakeshaft@vcu.edu or 804-828-1940) or Mr. Nicholas Garcia (garcianr2@vcu.edu or 540-273-4165).

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (804) 828-0868 or HRPP@vcu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about nine to fifteen people will be in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

In this study, you will receive a survey that will ask for information about your professional background and information about your department. The survey will take about 30 minutes for you to fill out. The next step will include participating in an interview. The researcher will ask you questions about your role as a department chair and the choices you made that may have impacted the growth of underrepresented minority faculty members in your department. This interview will last between 60-75 minutes and will take place virtually through Zoom at your availability. The researcher will ask to make a recording of the video that will be used solely to transcribe the interview and then will be deleted. You can opt for your interview not to be recorded. After your interview, you will be asked to identify two faculty members in your department for additional interviews about your department’s history and culture of diversity and inclusion from the faculty perspective.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time; it will not be held against you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? (Detailed Risks)

Participation in research might involve some loss of privacy. There is a small risk that someone outside the research study could see and misuse information about you.

In addition, the research survey and interview may contain questions relating to your profession/career. You may refuse to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information for the purposes of managing, monitoring and overseeing this study include the IRB and other representatives of this organization. Your information or samples that are collected as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if all of your identifiers are removed.

Signature Block

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

 Signature of subject

Date

 Printed name of subject

Date

 Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

 Printed name of person obtaining consent

Appendix B: Faculty Consent Form

Permission to Take Part in a Human Research Study

ICF version number: Version 3

Title of research study: Department Chairs' Impact on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Their Departments (HM20028341)

Investigator:

Dr. Charol Shakeshaft, Ph.D., Professor, Educational Leadership, VCU School of Education. 804-828-1940

Mr. Nicholas Garcia II, MPA, Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership, VCU School of Education. 540-273-4165

***Key Information:* The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this study.**

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because your department is one of the few at Virginia Commonwealth University that made gains in faculty diversity between 2017 and 2022.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

University department chairs serve as the leaders of their departments but also as middle managers. While many department chairs see their role as having little authority, they still play an integral role in day-to-day campus operations. As leaders of their departments, chairs can directly influence the department's organizational culture to include the make-up of the faculty. As college student demographics continue to diversify, there are calls for diversity among department faculty. This study investigates the role department chairs can play in diversifying their faculty.

How long will the research take and what will I need to do?

We expect that you will be in this research study for 30-45 minutes total.

You will be asked to participate in an interview about your experience in your department and its efforts to diversify faculty (30-45 minutes). I will ask to record this interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, the recording will be deleted. You can opt for your interview not to be recorded.

More detailed information about the study procedures can be found under ***"What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?"***

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

Participation in research might involve some loss of privacy. There is a small risk that someone outside the research study could see and misuse information about you.

Surveys and interviews may contain questions that are personal in nature and that relate to your profession/career. You may refuse to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

More detailed information about the risks of this study can be found under ***“Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? (Detailed Risks)”***

Will being in this study help me in any way?

There are no benefits to you from your taking part in this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include helping understand how department chairs can influence the diversity and inclusion of their departments to better promote a more diverse faculty population.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You can decide to participate, not participate, or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

Detailed Information: The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team: Dr. Charol Shakeshaft (cshakeshaft@vcu.edu or 804-828-1940) or Mr. Nicholas Garcia (garcianr2@vcu.edu or 540-273-4165).

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (804) 828-0868 or HRPP@vcu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about nine to fifteen people will be in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

In this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. The researcher will ask you questions about your department and the department chair’s role in the growth of underrepresented minority faculty members. The interview will last between 30-45 minutes and will take place virtually through Zoom at your availability. The researcher will ask to make a recording of the video that will be used solely to transcribe the interview and then will be deleted. You can opt for your interview not to be recorded.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time; it will not be held against you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? (Detailed Risks)

Participation in research might involve some loss of privacy. There is a small risk that someone outside the research study could see and misuse information about you.

In addition, the research survey and interview may contain questions relating to your profession/career. You may refuse to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information for the purposes of managing, monitoring and overseeing this study include the IRB and other representatives of this organization. *Your information or samples that are collected as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if all of your identifiers are removed.*

Signature Block

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

Signature of subject Date

Printed name of subject Date

Signature of person obtaining consent Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent Date

Appendix C: One-Page Overview

Research Problem:

University department chairs serve as the leaders of their departments but also as middle managers. While some department chairs see their role as having little authority, they still play an integral role in day-to-day campus operations. Chairs can directly influence the department's organizational culture to include the make-up of the faculty. As college student demographics continue to diversify, there are calls for diversity among department faculty. This study investigates the role department chairs play in diversifying their faculty.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this proposed study is to explore the department chair's role in increasing their department's diversity and inclusiveness.

Research Questions:

1. How do department chairs describe their goals and actions for creating a more diverse faculty?
2. How do department chairs describe their goals and actions for an inclusive department culture?
3. What challenges do department chairs describe in working toward a representative, culturally diverse, and inclusive department?
4. How do department chairs describe the scope of their ability to use discretion in their role?

Methodology:

Department chairs will receive a short survey to collect personal history and background information related to their department. Interviews will then be conducted with participating department chairs to learn more about their choices that may have impacted the recruitment of diverse faculty. Two additional department faculty will be selected for interviews to provide additional perspectives on departmental leadership in diversifying the racial/ethnic mix of the faculty. Additional data will be collected through departmental and university artifacts, including mission statements, departmental websites, and physical spaces.

Significance and Contribution:

This study will aim to expand on literature related to the department chair role, particularly in gaining a deeper understanding of how department chair decision-making can impact the culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their department.

Appendix D: Chair Solicitation Email

Dear <<Department Chair Name>>,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Nick Garcia, and I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Educational Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University. Your department is one of a few on VCU's Monroe Park Campus that successfully increased its faculty diversity between 2017 and 2022. Because of this, it has been selected for possible participation in my dissertation research.

I am writing to ask for your participation in my research study on department chairs who have successfully increased the diversity of faculty in their departments.

As you know, diversity is essential to creating a vibrant and inclusive academic environment. However, many departments struggle to recruit and retain faculty from diverse backgrounds. My research aims to identify the best practices that department chairs can use to increase faculty diversity.

I would like to interview you about your experiences as a department chair and the specific strategies and decisions you have used to increase faculty diversity in your department. Your insights would help me to develop a better understanding of how department chairs can be successful in their efforts to create more diverse and inclusive academic communities.

The interview would last approximately 60-75 minutes and could be conducted virtually via Zoom. I plan to conduct all interviews before the December 2023 winter break. I am flexible with the time and date of the interview, and I am happy to work around your schedule. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to complete a brief survey that will include questions about your background and your department. I anticipate the survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

I've attached a one-page overview of the study to this email for your review. All data collected will be de-identified, kept confidential, and used only for research purposes.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please reply to this email and let me know. I would be happy to send you more information about the study and answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nick Garcia

Appendix E: Faculty Solicitation Email

Dear <<Faculty Name>>,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Nick Garcia, and I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Educational Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Your department is one of a few on VCU's Monroe Park Campus that successfully increased its faculty diversity between 2017 and 2022. Because of this, it has been selected for possible participation in my dissertation research.

I am writing to ask for your participation in my research study on department chairs who have successfully increased the diversity of faculty in their departments. I have interviewed your department chair and they recommended that I reach out to you for further information about your departments and its efforts to diversify the faculty.

As you know, diversity is essential to creating a vibrant and inclusive academic environment. However, many departments struggle to recruit and retain faculty from diverse backgrounds. My research aims to identify the best practices that departments can use to increase faculty diversity.

I would like to interview you about your experiences in your department and about the specific strategies and decisions that may have been used to increase faculty diversity. Your insights would help me better understand how department chairs and faculty can work together to increase department diversity.

The interview would last approximately 30-45 minutes and could be conducted virtually via Zoom. I plan to complete all interviews before the end of January. I am flexible with the time and date of the interview, and I am happy to work around your schedule.

I've attached a one-page study overview to this email for your review. All data collected will be de-identified, kept confidential, and used only for research purposes.

If you are willing to participate in my study, please reply to this email and let me know. I would be happy to send you more information about the study and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nick Garcia

Appendix F: Department Chair Pre-Interview Survey

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study and for taking the time to complete this survey.

Instructions: Please answer each question to the best of your ability. Please provide answers that best represent your opinion or experience. If you have any questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email at garcianr2@vcu.edu.

Please note that all responses will be kept confidential and identifying information will be removed and responses will be anonymized before being used for research.

1. Name:
2. Department Name:
3. Please upload a copy of your most recent CV:
4. Age:
5. Gender:
 - a. Cis Man
 - b. Cis Woman
 - c. Trans Man
 - d. Trans Woman
 - e. Non-Binary
 - f. Prefer not to say
6. Race (select all that apply):
 - a. Native American/Alaskan
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black/African American
 - d. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - e. Hispanic/Latino/a
 - f. White
 - g. Prefer not to say
7. What is your position type:
 - a. Tenured
 - b. Tenure Track
 - c. Term

- d. Other (please describe)
8. What is your faculty position:
- a. Professor
 - b. Associate Professor
 - c. Assistant Professor
 - d. Instructor
 - e. Other
9. Are you a first-generation faculty member? If neither of your parents were employed as faculty members, select "yes". If one of your parents was employed as a faculty member, select no.
- a. Yes
 - b. No
10. How many years have you served as department chair?
11. How many years have you been affiliated with your current department?
12. How did you obtain your position as department chair?
- a. I applied and was hired into the position
 - b. I was elected to the position by department faculty
 - c. I was appointed to the position
 - d. Other (please describe)
13. If you were appointed to the position, what was the role of the individual who appointed you??
14. Did you receive any training to prepare you for the department chair role?
- a. Yes
 - b. no
15. Please describe the training if you answered "yes" to the previous question.
16. How many full-time faculty are in your department?
17. How many faculty in your department have tenure as of spring 2023?
18. Approximately how many adjunct faculty does your department employ each semester?
19. Which of these best describes how adjuncts are hired in your department?
Please check all that apply.
- a. Faculty search committee

- b. Recommendations to the chair
 - c. Chair identifies and hires
 - d. Other (please describe)
20. How do adjunct faculty teaching assignments occur each semester? Please briefly explain how adjuncts are assigned the courses they will teach in a semester.
21. How many staff members work in your department?
22. How many staff members report directly to the chair?
23. What is the approximate number of full-time students in your department?
24. What programs are offered through your department (e.g. undergraduate, graduate, certificate, etc.)?
25. How many new full-time faculty hires has your department made since 2017?
26. Between 2017 and 2022, how many full-time faculty have left your department?
27. Which of these statements best describes you?
- a. I did not want to be department chair
 - b. I was hesitant to be department chair
 - c. I wanted to be department chair
28. Please select the level to which you agree with this statement: The department chair role is rewarding:
- a. Strongly do not agree
 - b. Do not agree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
29. Please select the level to which you agree with this statement: The department chair's role is important:
- a. Strongly do not agree
 - b. Do not agree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
30. How much authority do department chairs have?
- a. No authority
 - b. Little authority
 - c. Some authority
 - d. A lot of authority

31. Based upon your experience what are the top three areas in which department chairs have the most authority? (choose three)
- Hiring full-time faculty
 - Hiring adjunct faculty
 - Hiring staff
 - Budget
 - Teaching assignments
 - Service assignments
 - Providing departmental training
 - Assigning GTAs
 - Promotion and tenure
 - Student issues
 - Curriculum decisions
 - Course scheduling
 - Course modality
 - n.
32. Based on your experience, what areas do department chairs have little to no authority? (choose three)
- Hiring full-time faculty
 - Hiring adjunct faculty
 - Hiring staff
 - Budget
 - Teaching assignments
 - Service assignments
 - Providing departmental training
 - Assigning GTAs
 - Promotion and tenure
 - Student issues
 - Curriculum decisions
 - Course scheduling
 - Course modality
33. After serving as department chair, would you consider serving in the role again?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
34. Do you feel the department chair role has prepared you for future administrative positions?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe

35. After serving as chair, are you interested in future administrative leadership opportunities?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe

Appendix G: Department Chair Interview Protocol

Department Chair Interview Protocol:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which seeks to understand the role that department chairs can play in increasing diversity and inclusiveness of their departments. The research aims to identify methods department chairs employed that resulted in increased diversity of department faculty. The interview will last about 60-75 minutes, during which I will ask questions related to your background, department chair role, and decisions you made as department chair.

Before we begin, I would like to review the consent form you previously agreed to.

[Review relevant sections of the consent form].

The consent form indicates that I have your permission to record our interview today.

We can record the entire Zoom session (audio and visual), or we can opt only to record audio. Are you still okay with me recording the interview today? Which method of recording would you prefer I use?

Answer:

I will let you know when we begin recording. If you wish to pause the recording at any point, please let me know. I will also let you know when the recording has ended.

I will also be taking notes during the interview, so if you see me writing, that's what I am doing.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about the interview or the interview process?

[Address questions]

If, at any point in time, you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Interview Question	Question Type	Related Research Question	Possible Follow-up questions
I want to talk with you because your department has shown an increase in URM faculty members between 2017 and 2022. Was that an original goal of yours? Tell me how this happened.	Introductory	2	Were there any factors external to your department that may have contributed to the increase? Perhaps a school or university-wide initiative? Was this a department discussion you introduced, or did it come from department members? Were student concerns part of the process?
As a department chair, what role did you play in the hiring process?	Transitory	1	Were you on the search committee? If not, how did you communicate with the committee?

			What was your role? Did you talk with the department as a whole about what the department was looking for? Was there a deep discussion?
Were there any decisions you made that contributed to the increase in diversity, such as encouraging diverse candidates to apply, advertising positions in new ways and venues to reach a larger audience, or changing minimum requirements to positions to attract a larger pool?	Key	2	What were the decisions? Can you provide an example? [For each decision] Did you make these decisions independently, or did they require approval from the upper administration? What was the role of departmental faculty in making these decisions? Do faculty play an active role in the hiring process by serving on committees? If so, who selects committee membership? Were there any committee members external to the department? If so, what was their role? As chair, do you serve on the committee? If not on the committee, did you communicate with the committee? Did you have a vote?
Did you face any challenges or pushback in making decisions that supported diversity?	Key	4	What were the challenges? Where did these challenges come from? Were these challenges unexpected?

			<p>How did you overcome these challenges?</p> <p>What type of support for these decisions existed?</p> <p>Any support from within the department or support external to the department?</p>
How would you describe your scope of authority as department chair within the context of your department?	Key	4	Do you think this is common for other department chairs or unique to your department? Is it different for different kinds of tasks? Hiring vs scheduling courses, for example?
As a department chair, do you have the authority to make decisions that impact the diversity of your department?	Key	1	<p>What role do you think you have in impacting the department's diversity?</p> <p>What responsibility do you think you as department chairs have to consider things like diversity and inclusion within their role?</p> <p>Could you make this decision alone, or did you need approval?</p>
How would you describe the work culture of your department?	Transitory	3	Would you say that everyone feels included?
How does the unique culture of your department shape your leadership approach and decision making?	Key	3	<p>Can you provide examples?</p> <p>Did you make decisions independently, or did they require approval from the upper administration?</p> <p>Do your faculty support your decisions? If so, how?</p> <p>Do you encounter any pushback (personnel,</p>

			budgetary, or otherwise) to decisions? If so, how?
How would you describe the amount of authority you have as department chair to make decisions that impact your department's diversity, equity, and inclusion?	Key	1	Do you think the amount of authority (or lack thereof) you had in your role is unique, or is it something common to other chairs at the university?
Is there anything else you think I should know about the role you played as a department chair in increasing the diversity of your department?	Closing	Closing	

Thank you for your time! Those are all the questions I have for you, and if there is nothing else you would like to mention, I will stop the recording.

Appendix H: Departmental Faculty Interview Protocol

Departmental Faculty Interview Protocol:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which seeks to understand the role that department chairs play in increasing the diversity and inclusiveness of their departments. I have chosen your department as one to include in my study because your department's faculty diversity increased between 2017 and 2022.

The research aims to identify methods departments and their chairs employed that resulted in increased diversity of department faculty. The interview will last about 30-45 minutes, during which I will ask questions related to your department and the role of faculty and chairs in increasing diversity and inclusion in the department.

Before we begin, I would like to review the consent form you previously agreed to. [Review relevant sections of the consent form]. The consent form indicates that I have your permission to record our interview today. We can record the entire Zoom session (audio and visual), or we can opt only to record audio. Are you still okay with me recording the interview today? Which method of recording would you prefer I use? Write in which one:

I will let you know when we begin recording, and if at any point you wish to pause the recording, please let me know. I will also let you know when the recording has ended. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the interview or the interview process? [Address questions] If, at any point in time, you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Interview Question	Question Type	Related Research Question	Follow up questions
I see that you are an <<Job Title>> professor, is that correct?	Introductory	Background	When did you join the department. Have you always worked in this department? How long have you worked in the department?
Looking back at the last academic year and through today, How often do you interact with the department chair?	Transitory	Background	
In the time that you have been a department member, and particularly within the last 6 years, What has occurred in your department that may have contributed to its increased diversity?	Key	2	What role did the chair play in these changes?

How would you describe the culture of your department, as it relates to diversity, between 2017 and 2022?	Key	2	Would you say that everyone felt included? Were there any shifts in culture that occurred in that time frame that may have played a role in the increased diversity?
What role do you think the department chair had in setting the department culture towards diversity and inclusion?	Key	3	Can you provide examples?
How, if at all, do faculty within your department create culture and support diversity and inclusion efforts?	Key	3	What proportion of faculty in your department regularly supports diversity and inclusion efforts?
How does the search process work in your department?	Key	1	Who serves on the committee? How many from your department? Students? Is the chair on the search committee? Have you served as a search committee member? If so, did the committee have any discussions around the diversity of candidates?
Can you describe how your department made decisions that increased URM on the faculty?	Key	3	How were search committee actions communicated to other department members? Did the department meet all of the candidates? Did the department members provide search committee representatives with their preferences and choices? How did the chair communicate their preferences to the faculty and the search

			committee? What was your role? Were these decisions purposeful and independent of outside pressure? What challenges does your department face in attempting to increase its diversity and inclusion?
Is there anything else you think I should know about the role your department chair plays in the diversity and inclusion of your department?	Closing	Closing	

Thank you for your time! Those are all the questions I have for you, and if there is nothing else you would like to mention, I will stop the recording.