

We write this letter as current, former, and prospective Presidential Management Fellows as well as other interested parties who are concerned that the PMF Program's assessment has unfairly disfavored Black applicants. In 2017, the PMF Program Office implemented a new, online-only assessment process. Due to this change, in 2019, white applicants were over four times as likely to be chosen as a finalist than Black applicants.

The implementation of the new selection process for 2017 Finalists coincided with a sharp decline in the percentage of Black/African American applicants selected as finalists and a sharp increase in the percentage of white applicants selected as finalists, indicating racial bias in the online assessment.

According to OPM's Statistical Data Mart (2020), in 2016, Black Fellows comprised 12% of all PMF Fellows.

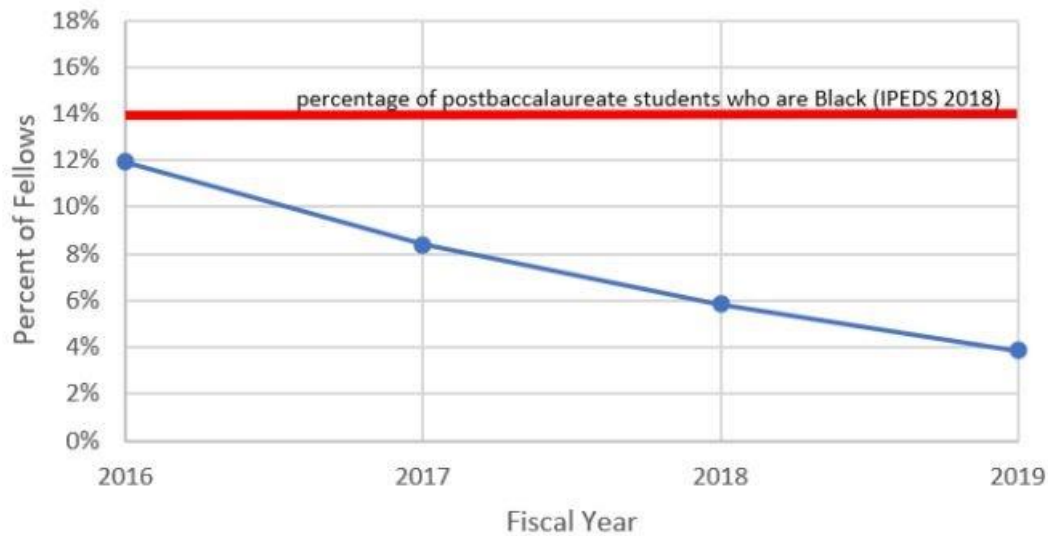
However, after the implementation of the new selection process in 2017, only 8% of PMF Fellows were Black. In 2018 and 2019, the share of Black Fellows continued to drop, to 6% and 4% respectively, as shown in the graph below. During the same period of time, White fellows increased from 71% to 79%. For reference, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) from the US Department of Education reports that approximately 14% of graduate students are Black. (Figure Below)

The adverse impact of the PMF assessment process is of great concern because the program is a pathway to federal leadership. The PMF program is a "flagship leadership development program" that "selects the best candidates possible," designed to develop "a cadre of potential government leaders." In fact, 10% of all Senior Executive Service members are alums of the program. Thus, an assessment process that disproportionately rejects Black applicants could mean federal leadership will lack Black leaders for decades to come.

As future leaders and concerned citizens, we all have an interest in identifying and actively developing anti-racism strategies to reshape institutions and reformulate practices and policies in the U.S. federal government. We call on the PMF Program Office to acknowledge this problem, commit to data transparency and adopt an equitable assessment process. We look forward to working with the Program Office to accomplish these goals in a timely manner.

Figure

Black/African American PMFs



Data Sources: Percentage of Black/African American PMF Fellows by Fiscal Year from OPM's Enterprise Human Resources Integration - Statistical Data Mart (2020). Percentage of postbaccalaureate students who are Black from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2018).

Signatories

Disclaimer: This letter was signed in individual capacities. The views expressed are those of the signatories and do not reflect the opinions of any entity of which they have been, are currently or will be affiliated with, or the United States government.

Frank Cousin
DeAntae Cooper
Nyamagaga Gondwe
Mary Ellen Stitt
Caroline Sigler
Garrison Anderson
Jaina Nian
Brianna Henry
Rose Luzader
John Andreoni
Ericka Boone
Margot Moinester
Zachary Pirtle
Dr. Portia R. Hemphill
Ally Logsdon
Eric T Shovein
Kyle Klarup
Ali Abazeed
Robin Rinker
Anne Herlache
Tyler Hubler
Phillippa Paisley
Lindsey E. Johnson
Chris Moore

Julia Burch
David Song
Jamie Elliott
David D. Sussman
Panah Stauffer
Megan Fleming
Diana Galperin
Matt Klasen
Mike DeMale
Jeffrey M. Pitts
Jill Denning
Chris Ramig
Rachel Minogue
Annelise Wornat
Stephanie Garcia
Wanda Wheeler
Mia Gordon
Diane Hill
Dennis Wagner
Allison Kolar
Unnamed 2021 PMF Applicant
Unnamed 2018 PMF
Unnamed 2020 PMF
Unnamed 2017 PMF
Unnamed Concerned Party
Unnamed 2016 PMF
Unnamed Concerned Party
Unnamed 2019 PMF

**Note: multiple people signed this version of the letter in addition to the 2nd version which includes the concerning events surrounding the expulsion of a 2020 PMF during the 2021 LDP Spring Session*