

Black Professors Under Pressure At Duke; Six Black Faculty Quit

University says it has hired 10 additional Black professors.

BY CHRISTINA ASQUITH

DURHAM, N.C.

Three months after she was chosen to head the committee on race in response to the university's lacrosse scandal, Duke University Professor Karla Holloway threatened to quit, citing exhaustion.

But, after meeting with colleagues earlier this month, Holloway reluctantly decided to stay on as committee head. Her frustration raises questions as to whether there is too much pressure on Black faculty at Duke to respond to the March crisis, in which a Black exotic dancer accused members of Duke's lacrosse team of rape and racial slurs — claims that have led to criminal charges against three of the players, all White.

"I'm working on a culture initiative when I should be doing research," says Holloway. "Of course you want a chance to make your campus better, but at what cost? When you are serviced to fix the problem, and you are also the victim, it's a double duty."

Says Duke provost Peter Lange about the burden placed on Black faculty, "If you have a small number of African-American faculty, and a crisis emerges of the kind that emerged here in March, then the burden on them shoots way up."

Since the March incident, six Black faculty members have left the university, most notably Dr. Charlotte Pierce-Baker, a professor of women's studies, and her husband Dr. Houston Baker, a professor of African-American literature. Both accepted positions at Vanderbilt University (see *Diverse*, June 15).

All six professors say they left for personal reasons, and many had already made plans to leave before the rape allegations surfaced. However, the timing has led some to question whether an exodus is afoot.

The university has hired an additional 10 Black professors to start this fall, half of whom signed on after March, Lange says. Two of the incoming professors are Dr. Keith

Whittfield and his wife, Dr. Linda Burton, both from Pennsylvania State University.

Nonetheless, the loss of six Black professors is particularly painful given that the university recently finished an extremely successful, decade-long initiative to build up its Black faculty. From 1993 to 2003, the university doubled its Black faculty to 88 by offering financial incentives and generous research opportunities.

However, when the race initiative ended in 2003, it was replaced by a "diversity" initiative, says Holloway; and that was when Blacks "fell off the radar."

Duke administrators disagree. They called the switch in language from race to diversity an "expansion."

"I don't like to make contrasts between race and diversity as if it's a trade off. It's an expansion," Lange says. "We view diversity as important, and we need to capture that diversity, but not at the expense of African-American hiring." □

Study: California Admissions Process Unfair to Blacks

BY IBRAM ROGERS

LOS ANGELES

Black applicants are being systematically blocked from the University of California system partly because of a flawed admission scheme, according to a new University of California, Los Angeles report.

The admissions process is overly reliant on numerical indicators of "merit," such as SAT scores and weighted GPAs, says the report, which was produced by the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA.

"Those who are in a position to do something ... are saying, 'Our hands are tied, there's nothing we can do without breaking the law,'" says Dr. Darnell Hunt, director of the Bunche center.

"We are saying that's patently false," he

says. "There is something they can do. There's something wrong with the admissions process."

At the system's three most selective universities — UC-Berkeley, UCLA and UC-San Diego — Black admits comprised 3.3 percent, 2 percent and 1.9 percent, respectively. Fewer than 100 Black freshmen are expected to enroll at UCLA this fall.

Meanwhile, the percentage of Black students who are eligible for admission more than doubled between 1996 and 2003. UC applications increased 24 percent between 1995 and 2004.

The rise in both factors suggests "that the low African-American admission rate at a campus like UCLA is hardly due to a limited applicant pool," the report says.

Instead, the report blames the low

admissions numbers on the system's admissions format, in which merit is too narrowly defined. "Merit" shouldn't be based primarily on GPA and SAT scores, which neglect a number of other factors, the report says.

Hunt says the average GPA of the incoming class of students at UCLA is 4.27. Students from well-resourced schools can amass such high GPAs by taking weighted Advanced Placement courses, which often aren't offered at predominantly Black high schools.

Instead of changing the admissions process, UC officials point to the well-documented inequalities of the California K-12 system and the 1996 passage of Proposition 209, which banned racial preference in admissions, to explain the decline of Black students in the UC system, Hunt says. □