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ON A MISSION: EXAMINATION OF GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR
MULTICULTURAL WOMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
BOSTON

by

Annmarie McCluskey

©

SYNTHESIS*

MASTER OF ARTS

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

May 2022

Advisor: Robert Ricketts

*The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses significant issues affecting Multicultural Women Graduate Students at the University of Massachusetts Boston, a Predominately White Institution, for creating a centralized graduate resources weblink on the Office of Graduate Studies website. The intervention seeks to address navigating gender and race inequalities that create a double bind experience of stress within a dominant academic culture that reinforces isolation, intersectional barriers, microaggressions, and pressure to assimilate to the dominant culture. Facilitation of this proposal will impact Multicultural Women Graduate Students, the Office of Graduate Studies, the Provost's Office which oversees the OGS, and the entirety of the University of Massachusetts Boston graduate student body. Finally, I reflect on the Critical and Creative Thinking Program's scholastic influence by applying Systems Thinking methods as a solution-based approach to address the cause-and-effect consequences of non-inclusive paradigms and systemic hierarchies.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
II.	BACKGROUND.....	8
III.	SYSTEMS THINKING FRAMEWORK.....	10
IV.	MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCES.....	12
V.	PROBLEM/NEEDS	14
	The Intersectional Experience.....	14
	The Dynamics of Microaggressions.....	15
	Dimensions of Assimilation.....	17
	Mental Health Stigma & Minorities.....	18
	Bicultural Competence.....	19
	Collateral Stressors	19
VI.	MINDFUL ALLYSHIP.....	20
VII.	RESOURCES AT UMB.....	22
	Location, Location, Location	23
VIII.	GOALS & OBJECTIVES.....	26
IX.	BUDGET	28
	Personnel.....	29
	Supplies.....	29
	Indirect Costs.....	30
X.	TIMETABLE/MILESTONES.....	30
XI.	FURTHER IMPLICATIONS	31
XII.	CONCLUSION.....	33
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	36
	APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL LETTER.....	39
	APPENDIX B: UMB MISSION STATEMENT.....	40

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

I. INTRODUCTION

It was 1993 and my junior year of high school. My mother and I were out running errands on a balmy Florida morning. I was protesting that I was not sure college was for me and that maybe I should take a few years off after graduation to "find myself." Upon my saying this, my mother put her car into park, looked me in the eyes, and said, "Honey, your life will be hard at times for no other reason than you are a woman, do not make it harder for yourself by not having an education. It's the one thing no one can ever take from you." This sentiment came from a woman who graduated top of her class at Roslindale High School in 1965. She did not go to the parochial school her brothers attended as she would not be going to college. When she graduated, she inquired about furthering her education and was told that women did not need college to learn to change diapers. This experience made my mother prioritize and support her daughter's education, emphasizing things I was too naive to understand at sixteen years of age.

The stunning realization that education, particularly for women, was not always an equitable opportunity had a massive impact on me. It sparked a lifelong interest and advocacy for women's educational equality. My career would bring me to higher education, working with graduate students and grant research. Today's higher education playing field may be a bit more equal for some women, but primarily for those of privileged backgrounds. The spirit of continuous improvement is the aim of this text by extending my hand to women, not of this background to support and validate their educational journey. I know now that education is the ultimate form of freedom. As it would turn out, Mom is always right.

My interest in evolving to the most authentic version of myself guided me to the Critical and Creative Thinking graduate program at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB). This Program has encouraged observing my cognitive processes that ultimately influence best

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

practices by inviting others to do the same. I do this by examining opportunities to "start where I am" in the communities I belong to and this continues to grow into a reflexive practice due to my studies in the Critical and Creative Thinking program.

During the summer of 2021, I took CRCRTH 627, "Issues and Controversies in Anti-Racist and Multicultural Education," which profoundly changed me. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this class would inspire my research interests for the remainder of my training in the Program. Through this class, I learned many components of multicultural pedagogy and the historical inequalities that exist in this realm. I also learned of the barriers of intersectionality and how this affected multicultural women students. This class built the foundation for how I began to create an allyship in the community around me. I felt challenged to look for areas I could assist- not fix. I became involved with a Racial Justice group at UMB, where I continue to be willing to learn. I was drawn back to the ominous warning from my mother. There is freedom in education, especially for women, and yet we are still not there for all. This realization would become the most defining moment of my pedagogical experience. As a white woman graduate student, I can identify my areas of stress in my own experience and desire to understand how this affects other women who have not had privileged life experiences. This awareness is my motivation to examine research that supports a feasible call to action that may positively impact the graduate community at the UMB.

A significant demographic of women students in post-secondary education experience inequalities at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) of higher education in the United States

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

(US).¹ UMB is considered a Predominately White Institution, which means that the student body comprises the highest percentage of white students.² This synthesis will be to make explicit the rationale for a proposal in centralizing "Graduate Resources" on the homepage of the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) website as a collective of existing campus resources that promote inclusion. My observation of needing this resource was with women of multicultural backgrounds in mind; however, all graduate students may find this useful. Identifying issues unique to Multicultural Women Graduate Students (MWGS) will be explored, such as intersectional barriers, microaggressions, stress, fatigue, pressure to assimilate, fear of retaliation, and a heightened sense of isolation while enrolling at a PWI. UMB has many web-accessible resources cataloged that may be helpful for MWGS if centralized on the OGS site for ease of access. For MWGS, the experience of being enrolled in Graduate Programs at a PWI, such as UMB, may present challenges. Lack of support in psycho-social areas can adversely affect mental health and may be correlated to retention and degree completion.³ These helpful resources should be easy to identify and employ for graduate student use.

MWGS students are unique in having a double-bind experience of navigating both gender and race barriers. Therefore, this proposal asks for the opportunity to revise the Graduate Resource link on the OGS website to include women's and multicultural resources. This updated web link on the OGS site will provide resources with an emphasis on on-campus resources for MWGS completing a graduate degree at a UMB.

¹ Fallon Trent, Carissa Dwidwardani, & Cassandra Page, *Factors Impacting the Retention of Students of Color in Graduate Programs: A Qualitative Study*, (Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 15, no.3, 2021), 220.

² *CollegeSimply: University of Massachusetts Boston Diversity and Demographics*. Retrieved February 4, 2022, from <https://collegesimply.com/university-of-massachusetts-boston/students/>

³ Trent, Dwidwardani, & Page *Factors Impacting the Retention of Students of Color in Graduate Programs*, 221.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

As an employee of UMB and a Critical and Creative Thinking graduate student, it is my concern that our educational community can speak to current events that may impact our students' lives. For example, the University of Massachusetts Boston has done a significant job creating web resources for students but could do better connect these resources as an academic community. For instance, many campus resource centers exist for students but are not cross-promoted within other campus resources. In addition, easily locating help for UMB students when the US has witnessed an influx of racial injustices subjected to minorities should be prioritized.⁴ I began to reflect on the questions, " Are our actions aligned with our mission statement?"⁵ And is UMB doing an excellent job telling our students how to find these resources?

Multicultural Women Graduate Students do get overlooked for needing assistance for being defined into a single category of either being women or being a minority, not both, as they are. Resources available for academic support on college campuses are often specific to race *or* gender-related issues and not a combination of these resources. Overlooking the big picture that captures the life experiences of MWGS may explain why this fastest-growing population to enter graduate school remains the lowest population to be graduate degree holders.⁶ This information suggests that higher education fails to serve these women in some crucial way. Retention factors in post-secondary education for MWGS may be attributed to the trauma of witnessing racially motivated violence, the emotional pressures of bicultural expectations, the isolation of being an

⁴ Curtis, David S., Tessa Washburn, Hedwig Lee, Ken R. Smith, Jaewhan Kim, Connor D. Martz, Michael R. Kramer, and David H. Chae, *Highly public anti-Black violence is associated with poor mental health days for Black Americans*, (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 17 2021), 1.

⁵ *The University: Mission and Values*. The University of Massachusetts Boston. (n.d.). Retrieved February 4, 2022, from https://www.umb.edu/the_university/mission_values.

⁶ Trent, Dwidwardani, & Page *Factors Impacting the Retention of Students of Color in Graduate Programs*, 221.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

"outsider," and feelings of guilt for assimilating behaviors in the presence of dominant cultures. These factors can all be linked to stress caused by the intersectional barriers of being an MWGS at a PWI. Addressing the needs surrounding the social well-being of this population is imperative to successful degree completion and something for UMB to prioritize in alignment with its Mission and Values statement.⁷

II. BACKGROUND

Although public universities are much more diverse than they used to be, an antiquated culture of unspoken privilege is a carry-over atmosphere of most PWI's. Nevertheless, an increase in the enrollment of minority women in graduate studies alludes to a movement for equality in education.⁸ However, higher education in the US was not initially set up to be all-inclusive. Gaining admittance to equal education for minorities required grassroots organizing, lawsuits, protests, and Congressional legislation. The opportunity for minorities to access the same education that white students had did not come without a fight. The echoes of these protests still reverberate through the halls of our national education structure. We may not all hear it, but those whose mothers championed educational equality can. PWI's have an opportunity to acknowledge how diverse student bodies experience a PWI concerning identities and social positions both on and off-campus.

⁷ *The University: Mission and Values*. The University of Massachusetts Boston. (n.d.). Retrieved February 4, 2022, from https://www.umb.edu/the_university/mission_values

⁸ Trent, Dwidwardani, & Page *Factors Impacting the Retention of Students of Color in Graduate Programs*, 221.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Before the American Revolution, nine higher education institutions were already established in the American Colonies.⁹ These institutions reflected the elements of anglicized values as a mission to civilize the new world based on directives of British Rule. This vision incorporated religious and racialized ideologies as a divine providence that drew the blueprint of how we were to pour the foundation into building our nation's institutions. Unfortunately, post-colonized America continued to perpetuate these ideas, and our higher education system would not include women and People of Color for many years. Women were seen as inferior to men and not included in educational developments due to the social roles of the time.¹⁰ People of Color were thought to be less capable of education based upon “scientific racism” to support inferiority as a genetic basis for those not of European heritage. Combining these biases may help understand what an MWGS is up against for a historical backdrop of judgement in the classroom. A history of segregation is an embedded and systemic mechanism that continues to exist within US institutions today. The unspoken norms and rules that are the bedrock of the US educational system are known and felt by minority students, especially women. MWGS have learned that education is about learning *and* how to survive systemic gender and race bias. Unfortunately, educational institutions still mirror society's power and hierarchy to preserve the status quo.¹¹ As this is the systemic and rooted history in US higher education, it is imperative to make strides that ensure students know what resources are available and where to find them.

⁹ The Harvard Crimson: Colleges in the Colonial Times (n.d.) Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1883/4/20/colleges-in-the-colonial-times-/>

¹⁰ Deborah Warnock, *Intersectionality and Higher Education*, (Ithaca, NY, Rutgers University Press, 2019), 9.

¹¹ Warnock, *Intersectionality and Higher Education*, 10-11.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

The University of Washington (UW) Graduate Studies website has embarked upon a similar idea of centralizing graduate resources. The UW Office of Graduate Studies is linked to a UW Graduate Student Equity & Excellence website to "provide leadership and advocacy to achieve equitable representation, access, and success for graduate students of color at the University of Washington."¹² Important UW resources are listed on this website that speaks to the psycho-social and academic needs unique to minority student populations. The UW website for graduate studies is an exemplar model for multicultural inclusivity. I believe this model is one UMB should look to in creating a centralized graduate student resource. Doing so would be a step toward acknowledging the need for this initiative. UMB and UW are similar in that they have similar enrollment numbers, are public universities, and have a diverse student population. Therefore, the UW model would translate well on the UMB campus and can be used as a source of inspiration.

III. SYSTEMS THINKING FRAMEWORK

Systems Thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes.¹³ We look for the interrelationship of things rather than the things as separate parts. When patterns of stagnation are identified, patterns of change can be embarked upon by converting the status quo into opportunities. All people are part of a system. We understand systems by noting the dynamics experienced in these localities, which can be referred to as niches. Part of the human experience is that we do not live alone, and

¹² *GSEE: Graduate Student Equity & Excellence*. U.W. Graduate School. (n.d.). Retrieved April 9, 2022, from <https://grad.uw.edu/equity-inclusion-and-diversity/gsee/>

¹³ Peter M. Senge. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. (Currency, 2014), 88.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

this experience defines our awareness. We are all connected and interdependent upon the members of our niches. One of my niches is UMB, where I both work and study.

Systems can be on a large scale, such as higher education institutions, down to small scales like the nuclear family structure. Membership in various systems happens simultaneously with one another. The human experience consists of the social connections and participation in the groups with which we identify, and also with groups with which we do not identify. The fundamentals of Systems Thinking are the acknowledgment that problems will naturally arise from time to time within these systems. Outcomes can sometimes harm others in our niche. We can produce and reproduce consequences through damaged feedback loops that circulate outdated or misguided information within our niche.¹⁴ A thorough examination of thinking and being is required for any niche's survival.¹⁵ We can make the needed changes when we understand how problems come about. Like a garden, these structures need to be tended to in order to grow healthy and bountiful. Systems Thinkers look for the areas that need pruning, knowing that constant evaluation is required to determine the wildflowers from the weeds. Members of systems have the opportunity to understand these situations to gain perspective and use the leverage of what steps may be taken to remedy these situations.¹⁶ Having a systems knowledge means nothing if it does not influence what I do, how I think, and act.¹⁷

¹⁴ Senge. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*, 114.

¹⁵ The Systems Thinker, Ricard Karash. "How To See Structure." Retrieved 3/26/2020. <https://thesystemsthinker.com/how-to-see-structure/>

¹⁶ Donella H. Meadows "Leverage points: Places to intervene in a system." (1999): 980989.

¹⁷ Peter Senge, "Systems Thinking for a Better World" YouTube video, 1:00:14, November 20, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QtQqZ6Q5-o>.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

A Systems Thinking approach is imperative for learning organizations as it challenges the ordinary ways we think and talk about complex issues.¹⁸ Deficient internal structures and lack of resources in the U.S. higher education systems can be hard to identify as they have existed for so long. Perhaps this is the case at UMB, where resources for MWGS may not have been prioritized before, much less considered deficient. This omission may be due to the historical foundations I have already outlined. Applying a Systems Thinking approach helps me to identify non-inclusive paradigms within the UMB structure that derail fulfilling the systemic goals the University has set.

Using a Systems Thinking approach to my synthesis requires a commitment to including other interested parties on campus with different points of view to be stakeholders. Collective intelligence organized in this way leads to real solutions in recognizing there is power in unification.¹⁹ Using a series of questions can help to determine root causes for analysis. This method promotes continual improvement and assists in identifying the error.²⁰ Asking questions is the key component of Critical Thinking, as this helps us identify a hypothesis for problem-solving, especially in niche-based scenarios.

Using the Five Whys technique below, I examine the root cause and effect of solution-based problem-solving.²¹ This approach allows for digging deeper with each successive question for a robust examination of problems, which becomes the path to a solution.

Problem: Lack Web-Based Resources For MWGS at UMB

¹⁸ Senge. *The Fifth discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*, 88.

¹⁹ Arthur L. Costa. *Developing minds: A resource book for teaching thinking*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 225 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314, 1985.

²⁰ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*, 104.

²¹ Taiichi Ohno. "Ask why five times about every matter." (*Toyota Traditions* 2006).

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Why?: Existing Resources For Graduate Students Are Not Promoted Interdepartmentally

Why?: Unique Intersectional Needs Not Acknowledged Attributing To Stress

Why?: Lack of Validation Leads to Isolation, Program Withdrawal, & Physical Illness

Why?: Searching For Scattered Resources Adds To Racial Battle Fatigue For MWGS

Why?: Existing Resources Are Not Centralized For Graduate Students For Ease of Accessibility

=Root Cause; Area to Resolve

IV. MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCES

I have chosen to use "multicultural" (henceforth without quotation marks) to describe unrepresented women graduate students at UMB. The inclusion of marginalized voices is not monolithic, and there are many perspectives to be mindful of, especially when speaking to diverse populations.²² This definition is intended to include those in positions of social inequalities.²³ Allowing individuals to have the freedom to discern their identification creates pluralism. Multiculturalism also allows UMB to reach the many facets of campus life that make up the student body to establish best practices for real inclusion. Contextual factors of multiculturalism include interpersonal relations, cultural heritage, and personal identity.²⁴ Multiculturalism shifts thinking to the student's individual experience whose ancestry is not of

²² Andrea Voyer, *Disciplined to diversity: learning the language of multiculturalism* (Ethnic and Racial Studies, 34:11, 2011), 1875.

²³ Voyer, *Disciplined to diversity: learning the language of multiculturalism*, 1876.

²⁴ Yolanda Moses. "Is the term "people of color" acceptable in this day and age?" (*Sapiens: Anthropology/everything human* 7 2016) 500

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

dominance and who may also identify with more than one societal culture.²⁵ I feel this qualifies for this work.

Black, Indigenous, (and), People of Color (BIPOC) is a popular term used in the US and Canada to encompass all non-white groups with a shared experience of systemic racism.²⁶ The term People of Color originates from the French colonization era of the Caribbean and La Louisianne to describe those of mixed African-European ancestry born free or freed from slavery.²⁷ Terms such as BIPOC and POC include various ethnic groups that form solidarity but at the same time may create a racialized hierarchy. The mainstream use of BIPOC does not account for the individual experiences of those identified and lumps these groups together.²⁸ BIPOC and POC labels may be considered a monolithic description that neglects the individuality of the cultures it represents. This type of white/non-white racial binary negates the racial identities of racial groups members and perpetuates oppression by discounting individuality.²⁹ Group identities go much further than being classified as "not white."³⁰ Using inclusive language is essential in creating a supportive structure.

Genuine multicultural perspectives are not tied to the rules of conversation.³¹

²⁵ Davina Vora, Lee Martin, Stacey R. Fitzsimmons, Andre A. Pekerti, C. Lakshman, and Salma Raheem. "Multiculturalism within individuals: A review, critique, and agenda for future research." (*Journal of International Business Studies* 50, no. 4 2019): 500.

²⁶ Moses., "Is the term "people of color" acceptable in this day and age?", 1.

²⁷ Moses, "Is the term "people of color" acceptable in this day and age?", 1.

²⁸ Moses "Is the term "people of color" acceptable in this day and age?", 3.

²⁹ VS Patel. "Moving toward an inclusive model of allyship for racial justice." (*The Vermont Connection* 32.1 2011) 80.

³⁰ Patel, "Moving toward an inclusive model of allyship for racial justice," 81.

³¹ Voyer, *Disciplined to diversity: learning the language of multiculturalism*, 1877.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

This objective is also in alignment with the Chancellor's Mission of Inclusivity goals.³² Strides to create change shifts multiculturalism as a norm and is an oath on the part of the University. However, change in the culture of an agency must first be identified as a change first required of members.³³ The university must make every effort to make the objectives of this Mission as easy as possible for those it is meant to serve.

V. PROBLEM/NEEDS

The Intersectional Experience

While equality is essential to all students, MWGS face a double-bind experience of intersectional bias that consists of both sexism and racism. The duality has significant meanings that differentiate it from the experience of other student groups. For example, an MWGS may experience misogyny and racism, but she will experience misogyny differently than a White Woman and racism differently than a Multicultural Man. This experience can create feelings of being an outsider for MWGS who cannot identify with the dominant group of student ethnicity and gender in graduate school.³⁴ Intersectionality refers to forms of intersecting discrimination (such as race and sex) that cause an overlap of dual discrimination. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality in the late 1980's as a heuristic term to focus attention on illustrating that race and class cannot separate gender; women face simultaneous

³² *Umass Boston: Chancellor's Goals AY 20-2*. The University of Massachusetts Boston. (n.d.). Retrieved February 4, 2022, from http://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/proteomics_core_facility/AY21_Chancellor_Goals.pdf.

³³ Voyer, *Disciplined to diversity: learning the language of multiculturalism*, 1877.

³⁴ Evelyn Ellis, *The Impact of Race and Gender on Graduate School Socialization, Satisfaction with Doctoral Study, and Commitment to Degree Completion*, (*Western Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 1 2001), 31.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

discrimination based on these attributes.³⁵ A sense of belonging in a PWI may feel elusive to an MWGS due to not having many commonalities with the dominant group. Therefore, they may feel inadequately prepared for interpersonal relations within their studies.³⁶

The Dynamics of Microaggressions

All women share a common barrier of facing patriarchal confines. However, structural inequalities of privilege produce a different experience of gender-imposed adversity to overcome. The life experiences of MWGS do not discount the discriminatory life experiences of White Women. However, we would be remiss to imply they are the same. Not recognizing privilege recreates a hegemonic structure even within feminism. Multicultural Women are subjected to gender and racial-driven microaggressions from male/female peers and faculty. Microaggressions are the conscious, deliberate, or subtle expressed biased attitudes to marginalized groups through verbalization and behaviors. These microaggressions are sometimes not even realized by those who extend them, which is why awareness needs to be addressed. The legacy of segregation and deep-rooted systemic racism in the US supports microaggressions within PWI's. Microaggressions experienced through daily communications convey stereotypes and insults that demean race and gender.³⁷ Microaggressions are passive-aggressive actions that reveal patterns of behaviors and events connected to larger structures of injustice.

Targeted groups of microaggressions endure self-doubt and accusations of being “too sensitive” when confronting their aggressors. The ambiguity of a microaggression allows the

³⁵ Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. “*Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis.*” (Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 38.4 2013): 787.

³⁶ Warnock, *Intersectionality and Higher Education*, 5-6.

³⁷ Susan Ayers, *Inside the Master's Gate: Resources and Tools to Dismantle Racism and Sexism in Higher Education*, (J.L. Soc'y 21, 2021) 38.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

dominant group to minimize the collective oppressions and the patterns it reproduces. Microaggressions emphasize derogatory messages to outwardly convey bias, in contrast to the implicit bias held inwardly by the dominant groups towards the marginalized groups. Willful systemic ignorance that focuses on micro-perspectives circumvents accountability (i.e., gaslighting) within the academy.³⁸ Disbelief results in the MWGS having their credibility negated and further discriminated against as a stereotype of an overly emotional, irrational, and unintelligible woman. The dominant culture's perspective cannot understand the view of the marginalized groups, so there is no framework to draw upon as a point of reference for comparison. This lack of empathy makes accusations of microaggressions easy to dismiss. Oppression in this manner pacifies the pattern of barriers that restrict progress.³⁹ Exposure to microaggressions can result in adverse psychological and physical consequences.⁴⁰ Psychological stress and racial battle fatigue are cumulative adverse effects of racial microaggressions that cause emotional exhaustion.⁴¹ Such stress can increase cardiovascular disease, neurological disorders, gastrointestinal issues, and memory retention caused by excessive exposure to traumatic stress.⁴²

Dimensions of Assimilation

³⁸ Barbara Applebaum, *Remediating Campus Climate: Implicit Bias Training Is Not Enough*. (Studies in Philosophy and Education 38, no. 2, 2019) 134.

³⁹ Applebaum, *Remediating Campus Climate*, 135.

⁴⁰ Ayers, *Inside the Master's Gate*, 46.

⁴¹ Monica Burke, *Moving Beyond the Statements: The Need for Action to Address Structural Racism in Predominately White Institutions*, (International Journal of Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Higher Education 5, no. 1, 2020), 175.

⁴² Ayers, *Inside the Master's Gate*, 43.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

The myth of meritocracy is an assumption that all groups have equal opportunities, and if someone is not successful, it is their fault, therefore advocating the blame of the victim.⁴³ An equal opportunity venue presented in this way is culture's "Master's Narrative" to maintain the status quo. Racial pluralism is a holistic (whole person) effort that supports and fosters trust within the institution's ability to support MWGS. Extending resources by acknowledging the unique dimensions MWGS experience in graduate studies would suggest PWI's of higher education become an ally to these women.⁴⁴

Assimilation to a dominant group of student ethnicity is another task to learn in graduate school outside of academic studies. Avoiding academic judgment for not assimilating at a PWI is not something White Women typically need to navigate. MWGS sometimes come from colleges and communities where their race was prevalent, only to become a distinct minority at a PWI for graduate school. The color of one's skin is not something that can be concealed, nor should it be; however, this visual difference can cause anxiety for the minority student.⁴⁵ This tension is identified as minority stress and is specific to the experiences resulting from one's identification with a stigmatized group and often the target of discrimination. All students at PWI's and otherwise experience generalized stress of being in college and meeting expectations. However, generalized stress does not include the specific stress experienced by minorities. Minority stress directly negatively impacts ethnic minority students' psychological well-being and retention.⁴⁶

Mental Health Stigma & Minorities

⁴³ Ayers, *Inside the Master's Gate*, 40.

⁴⁴ Burke, *Moving Beyond Statements*, 177.

⁴⁵ Esposito, *Negotiating the Gaze and Learning the Hidden Curriculum*, 144.

⁴⁶ Meifen Wei, Et al., *Minority stress, perceived bicultural competence, and depressive symptoms among ethnic minority college students* (*Journal of Counseling Psychology* 57, no. 4, 2010), 411.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, and norms of a given racial or ethnic group.⁴⁷

The stigma around mental health in some minority cultures may lead to a sense of shame in asking for help. Cultural barriers may also keep MWGS from seeking help outside of the academy. Mental illness stigma is a barrier to receiving mental health resources and recognizing the need to seek help. Social judgment and degradation of individuals with mental health symptoms can be a cultural norm, leading to reluctance to ask for help. Stigma involves negative attitudes or discrimination against someone based on a distinguishing characteristic, in this case, mental health issues, which may discredit an individual with fears of social judgments.⁴⁸

It is crucial for MWGS at a PWI to find peer and cultural connections outside of their programs. Having access to support systems, grants, and research opportunities for MWGS would also be helpful for the success of these students. These topics are also essential to be recognized and included as linked issues with centralized resources as these components all speak to overall mental health for MWGS.

Bicultural Competence

Cultivating a bicultural competence for multicultural students can help navigate a dominant campus culture. Bicultural competence, the ability to exist in a state of living in two groups without compromising a sense of cultural identity, can be a critical component of psychological well-being for students functioning in two or more cultural environments.

⁴⁷ Tahirah Abdullah and Tamara L. Brown. *Mental illness stigma and ethnocultural beliefs, values, and norms: An integrative review*, (Clinical Psychology review 31, no. 6, 2011), 935.

⁴⁸ Abdullah & Brown, *Mental illness stigma and ethnocultural beliefs, values, and norms*, 940.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Flexibility in perspectives of one's own culture compared to another culture can help interpret the value of the dominant culture without compromising one's own identity.⁴⁹ Coping mechanisms allow students to retain a relatively positive state of mental health despite negative experiences of minority stress.⁵⁰ Networking and solidarity can be established to create support networks for balancing dual identities within a dominant culture by having a resource specific to multicultural needs.

Collateral Stressors

Mentors and research opportunities are two more important areas for navigating intersectional stressors at a PWI. First, mentors are a vital component in the success of MWGS in graduate school at a PWI. Mentors assist with professional development, role modeling, psychosocial functions, work effectiveness, and academic support. Leadership in this way helps navigate the racial/gender constructs for successful enrollment and advancement.⁵¹ Mentors provided through academic departments may not always be the best match for the needs of an MWGS navigating a PWI. Locating suitable mentors at a PWI similar in ethnicity and gender may be challenging to obtain. A limited number of role models available for mentoring at a PWI may be due to a limited number of tenured track faculty of multicultural backgrounds who can identify with minority student experiences.⁵²

⁴⁹Wei, Et al., *Minority stress, perceived bicultural competence, and depressive symptoms among ethnic minority college students*, 412.

⁵⁰ Esposito, *Negotiating the Gaze and Learning the Hidden Curriculum*, 144.

⁵¹ Grant, Cosette M., & Ghee, Sarah, *Mentoring 101: Advancing African-American women faculty and doctoral student success in predominantly White institutions*, (*International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 28 (7), 2015, 760.

⁵² Grant, *Mentoring 101*, 762.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Second, MWGS at a PWI should feel supported in accessing information and research opportunities to cultivate a sense of integration within their area of study. Lack of research, grants, and teaching opportunities for minority interests may contribute to feelings of less importance for this population.⁵³

VI. MINDFUL ALLYSHIP

Emphasizing resources for MWGS should include anti-racist efforts and information established by the university. Often, the onus to require special measures is put on the minority group and not on the dominant group's culture that historically created these conditions. The word allyship can be problematic as it alludes to a binary model of a dominant group and an oppressed group.⁵⁴ This context refers to my (a white woman) working with "BIPOC" populations to end oppression. I sense this is dangerously close to alluding to having the dominance to liberate marginalized groups somehow, thus maintaining racial hierarchies.⁵⁵ Anti-racist education is so vital for this reason. The act of allyship creates venues of liberation by allowing and making space for other ideas not made through dominant groups.⁵⁶ Allyship supports interventions that facilitate critical engagement with cultures that deflect the racial binary status quo.

For many white US citizens, formal learning did not include or encourage the reflection of cultures outside of white interests. By engaging in Transformative Learning, I can reflect on prior information and absorb new information that aligns with my social interests, the hallmark

⁵³ Grant, *Mentoring 101*, 766.

⁵⁴ Patel, "Moving toward an inclusive model of allyship for racial justice," 79.

⁵⁵ Patel, "Moving toward an inclusive model of allyship for racial justice," 78.

⁵⁶ Patel, "Moving toward an inclusive model of allyship for racial justice," 84.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

of andragogy. Transformative learning did not just add to my existing framework but also fundamentally changed my conception and willingness to reflect and make emotional changes.⁵⁷ It was painful to learn of the injustices that I unwittingly was a benefactor of my entire life. This was a disorienting dilemma for an incredibly empathic and sensitive person. However, it is essential to note that calling attention to myself in this manner centers on white distress and negates the whole point of what I am trying to achieve. The remedy to grief and guilt awakened in me by this new information must lead to sustained and transformative action.⁵⁸ I had been educated and socialized in a culture of top-down discrimination tactics.

Solidarity can be messy. It requires continual self-evaluation and awareness that groups' identities shift from time to time. Learning to ask for preferred vocabulary reminds me to honor viewpoint diversity. My understanding of this did not come without missteps or taking the defense. However, this has shown me to accept these learning opportunities with modesty and acceptance. My goal is to learn what I need to know to be the person I am trying to be. Steps to furthering inclusivity were not a taught skill that had been explored and required the courage to talk through uncomfortable questions and feedback.⁵⁹ Examining the root of these emotions reminds me that allyship has nothing to do with me. Instead, interrupting the status quo and looking for improving equality is more important than my feelings.⁶⁰

Coming to terms with this was the beginning of my transformative journey of critical reflection and humility—any good intentions of "helping" on my part further marginalized

⁵⁷ Jack Mezirow. *Learning to Think Like an Adult*. In: J. Mezirow and Associates, eds. *Learning as Transformation*. (Josey-Bass, 2000) 8.

⁵⁸ Robin. DiAngelo, *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. (Beacon Press, 2018) 134.

⁵⁹ Voyer, *Disciplined to diversity: learning the language of multiculturalism*, 1889.

⁶⁰ DiAngelo, *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism* 143.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

disadvantaged groups. Labeling human beings in binary categories implies that those not on the dominant end of the spectrum cannot make changes without white help. The "us and them" approach to allyship is a definite implication that keeps everyone separated.⁶¹ A declaration of allyship requires examining my privilege and keeping altruism in check to avoid the "White Savior Complex."⁶² Recognizing this area for improvement is not about my self-interests or being seen as a good person for my ego's sake. It is about a moral commitment to critically examine structures that create the need for social action. I cannot fix anyone or anything, but I can desire to live in a world where opportunity is not kept at bay for some. Others like me share these goals to deconstruct these barriers in my workplace at UMB. Together we can look for the inconsistencies of the UMB Mission that systemically snuck past, bring them to light, and promise to do better.⁶³

VII. RESOURCES AT UMASS BOSTON

UMB has several webpage resources to help enrolled students. I was able to find university websites that speak to a range of needs. This process, however, took many hours to discover. In addition, I had difficulty finding valuable resources that could speak to multicultural experiences for women. The UMB Here4u site allows users to choose a topic area of interest for assistance.⁶⁴ There were no options for women, multicultural, or graduate school stress. So, I

⁶¹ Jenalee Kluttz, Jude Walker & Pierre Walter, *Unsettling allyship, unlearning and learning towards decolonising solidarity*, (Studies in the Education of Adults, 52:1, 2020) 52.

⁶² Klutz, Walker, & Walter, *Unsettling allyship, unlearning and learning towards decolonising solidarity*, 52.

⁶³ *The University: Mission and Values*. The University of Massachusetts Boston. (n.d.). Retrieved February 4, 2022, from https://www.umb.edu/the_university/mission_values

⁶⁴ *Here4U: The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from HTTP://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/here4u.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

decided to email them and ask for resources that spoke to helping students deal with stress related to race & gender (intersectionality) specifically. I received an automatic message saying that I would hear back in 2-3 business days with a response. I received a reply three days later with four web links to university resources. The university's resources speak to these unique issues; however, they are not easy to find. I also believe these UMB websites are not labeled to convey how they can help or the right resource for multiple issues.

Location, Location, Location

The OGS website does have a resource page link for graduate students listed under assistantships on their website.⁶⁵ This list links to necessary campus resources such as the counseling center, research opportunities, The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee. Unfortunately, there are no links to Multicultural Affairs or the Women's Center on this resource page. I believe UMB should move this page to the home page of the OGS website for ease of access. In addition, the resources listed require being updated to include those that could be useful to MWGS.

Seven existing UMB resource websites may speak to issues MWGS experience in graduate school. These internal websites do correlate with UMB's racial justice objectives.⁶⁶ But these websites are challenging to locate. The issue of making this easy for students to find may have been overlooked. Moments of high stress and fatigue may impede MWGS from searching endlessly for resources or waiting three days for a response. This makes accessing resources difficult and, in my opinion, may cause discouragement and apathy that keeps students from

⁶⁵*Graduate Student Resources: The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from http://www.umb.edu/academics/graduate/info_for_graduate_students/graduate_student_resource

⁶⁶*The University: Mission and Values.* The University of Massachusetts Boston. (n.d.). Retrieved February 4, 2022, from https://www.umb.edu/the_university/mission_values.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

reaching out. I believe that centralizing these resources for accessibility in one spot is the best practice for the welfare of the MWGS population. Centralizing resources may help other graduate students find campus resources also. The seven existing UMB websites that I feel will be best to add to the re-located Graduate Resource link on the OGS website are:

1. **UMB Women's Center-** The Women's Center is a student-run safe space for all women on campus. The center is open to all students, faculty, and staff identifying as women. In addition, the office provides a supportive space to discuss issues that affect women's lives both on and off-campus.⁶⁷
2. **Student Multicultural Affairs-** This site is committed to supporting a diverse community at UMB. Opportunities to learn about training, advocacy and leadership are offered. The office strives to build a university community where different cultural viewpoints and diverse identities are explored, disseminated, and respected.⁶⁸
3. **UMB Mental Health, Wellness, and Staying Safe from Violence-** This site offers an array of services that speak to the psycho-social well-being of students. The links provided cover mental health issues, domestic violence, immigration, and interfaith issues. This page is a bevy of resources that all students should be able to find easily.⁶⁹
4. **UMB Anti-Racism Resources-** This site gives information about anti-racism on our campus. This site works with other campus offices such as the Office of Social Justice

⁶⁷ *Women's Center: The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from [HTTP:// umb.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/womenscenter](http://umb.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/womenscenter).

⁶⁸ *SMCA: Student Multicultural Affairs: The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from [HTTP:// www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/multiculturalaffairs](http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/multiculturalaffairs)

⁶⁹ *Mental Health, Wellness, & Staying Safe from Violence: The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from http://www.umb.edu/resources4u/students/mental_health_and_staying_safe_from_violence

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Leadership and Service comprised of Student Multicultural Affairs, U-Access, Campus Ministry, and Student Leadership and Community Engagement. There is a list of anti-racism resources with which all students, faculty, and staff should become familiar. In addition, non-minority populations would benefit from becoming acquainted with this site.⁷⁰

5. **UMB Here4U**- The point of this resource is to centralize campus issues to be found easily. This page connects students with housing, discounted tickets, and student employment. Specific questions for campus resources can be explored here.⁷¹
6. **UMB U-Access**- This resource speaks to the non-academic challenges that students may encounter. These challenges may include food insecurity and poverty. The Mission of U-Access is to help UMass Boston students meet their basic needs to achieve academic success. This site is also known as the Office of Urban and Off-Campus Support Services, recognizing that students may need access to programs to assist with basic needs.⁷²
7. **Support Resources for the UMB Community**- This site offers student support services and links to information for healthy and inclusive environments that are supportive and safe. This site emphasizes inclusivity as a university community. The Student Affairs Office maintains this website.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Anti-Racism Resources: The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from [HTTP:// www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/oslce/anti_racism_resources](http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/oslce/anti_racism_resources).

⁷¹ *Here4U: The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from [HTTP:// www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/here4u](http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/here4u).

⁷² *U-Access: Office of Urban and Off-Campus Support Services, University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/uaccess

⁷³ *Support Resources for the UMass Boston Community: The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)* Retrieved February 4, 2022, from [HTTP:// www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/multiculturalaffairs/support_resources](http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/multiculturalaffairs/support_resources)

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

These sites cover a more inclusive range of topics that are important to the success of UMB's MWGS and should be easily found in one spot. There is an attempt to cross-link references in a few of these sites, which I feel has the possibility of becoming overwhelming and hard to find. Taking the resources already in existence at UMB and making them quickly accessible for graduate students may help navigate the experiences that may interfere with their well-being and affect academics.

VIII. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

There is a need at UMB that justifies requesting information that already exists to be pooled together so that it is found easily on the OGS website, particularly with multicultural women students in mind. However, the OGS page does give information about admissions, programs, faculty, and staff. For example, information about graduate programs states, "The Office of Graduate Studies oversees the graduate admissions processes and academic policies at UMass Boston and supports high-quality academic and professional Master's, doctoral, and certificate programs that foster intellectual creativity and rigorous research."⁷⁴ I feel this resource speaks to the business end of the graduate experiences. "Graduate Resources" is currently buried under the "Assistantships" subcategory of the OGS website. Moving and updating "Graduate Resources" to the OGS home page will prioritize all graduate students' well-being, not just those applying for assistantships. Information for prospective and current students to become familiar with from the very beginning of the matriculation experience should be easy to locate. I believe this is especially important for the MWGS experiencing a PWI for the first time. They will come

⁷⁴ *About: The Office of Graduate Studies, The University of Massachusetts Boston (n.d.)*
Retrieved February 4, 2022, from [HTTP:// www.umb.edu/academics/graduate/about](http://www.umb.edu/academics/graduate/about)

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

into the graduate studies space knowing they are supported and have access to valuable resources from the beginning of their experience at UMB. The revised Graduate Resource link on the OGS website will appear in the following way:

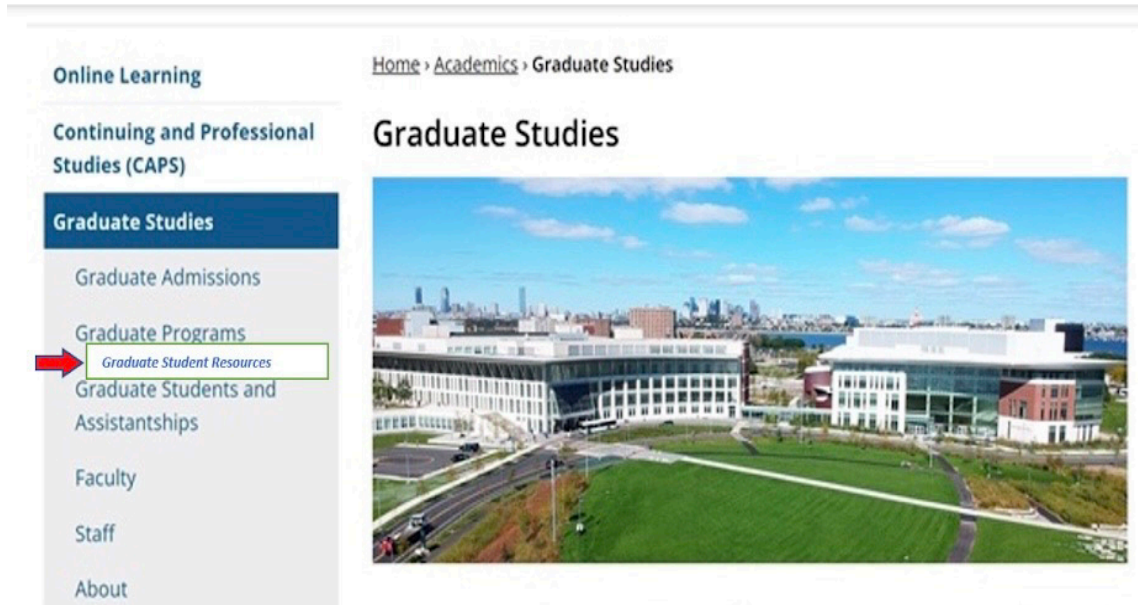


Figure 1. Proposed placement of Graduate Student Resources web link on OGS homepage.

This proposal asks that the Graduate Student Resource information be moved *to* the OGS home webpage *from* the Graduate Student and Assistantships hyperlink where it is presently located.

<p>Staff</p> <p>About</p> <p>Graduate Catalog</p> <p>COVID-19 Policy Adjustments</p>	<p>Books</p>	<p>UMass Boston Bookstore, Campus Center, Upper Level</p>
<p>Intercollegiate Programs</p> <p>Academic Support Services and Undergraduate Studies</p>	<p>Community</p> <p><u>EXISTING UMB LINKS TO ADD HERE:</u></p> <p>UMB Women’s Center</p> <p>Student Multicultural Affairs</p> <p>UMB Mental Health, Wellness, and Staying Safe from Violence</p> <p>UMB Anti-Racism Resources</p> <p>UMB Here4U</p> <p>UMB U-ACCESS</p> <p>Support Resources for the UMB Community</p>	<p>Graduate Student Assembly meetings and clubs</p> <p>Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion guides and resources</p> <p>Racial Justice & Social Equity</p> <p>Resources for LGBTQ+ students and allies</p> <p>Student Veterans' Center</p>

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Figure 2. Proposed placement of additional UMB resources to be added to the Graduate Student Resources weblink.

Seven existing UMB web pages will be added to the revised Graduate Student Resource hyperlink. These additions will include resources for women, multicultural, quality of life, and anti-racist education issues.

IX. BUDGET

Budgetary components to consider surround website changes and maintenance. The link for Graduate Resources will need to be moved from the Assistantships tab to the OGS homepage. UMB will add additional links to the Graduate Resources page to other helpful campus web resources. An administrator, or student employee, already working in the OGS will compile the available resources and add them to the OGS website and orientation schedule. Student employees who work in this office can update and maintain the link on the OGS website. They could even receive partial credits for this effort from their programs of study in place of a stipend.

Possible grant opportunities may exist for projects such as this to cover costs. If internal funds are not available for this endeavor, calls for sponsored funds can be explored that fit the parameters of this project. If external funds such as a grant could cover the initial costs of this proposal, a possible budget justification for this proposal will have the below expenses included.

Personnel

Undergraduate Assistant. This line item will compensate for the increased workload for office personnel in the OGS. It is estimated that 3 hours a month, which is 27 hours over a 9-month academic calendar, will be used to maintain and website link (0.16 academic months at \$15.00

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

hour). Another option for this expense is for the undergraduate student will perform this task for possible partial course credit upon academic approval.

Personnel Fringe

The fringe is calculated per a negotiated contract between the University of Massachusetts and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Personnel costs are not applied to student employees for work during the academic months.

Supplies

Technology. Funds are requested to purchase technological support. Implementing this page for setup will require the services of an established UMB vendor for Website design for the revised OGS website page. We anticipate any updates or changes made upon an annual review will be done internally.

Printing. Funds of \$500 for the setup year of this project. Funds will support campus-wide notices and flyers of the newly created resource. The funds requested reflect the printing costs of making these related materials sourced internally at UMB.

Engagement and Promotional Materials. We are requesting \$500 for the setup year of this project. Funds will be used to purchase materials (e.g., pens) to promote and encourage engagement with students and the campus community.

Indirect Costs

Expenses listed in Fig. 3 below would be subjected to a 36.4% facilities and administration cost if we could get these expenses covered through sponsored grant funds to pilot this initiative. The indirect cost percentage is calculated per the negotiated rate between the University of Massachusetts and the Department of Health and Human Services.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Expense Description	Total
Undergraduate Students	\$405
Supplies and Materials	\$2,000
Total Direct Cost	\$2,405
Base for Indirect Cost MTDC (On Campus)	\$2,405
Enter Facilities and Administrative Rate	36.40%
Total Indirect Costs	\$875
Total Cost of Project	\$3,280

Figure 3. The proposed budget for changes to the Resources web link on the OGS homepage.

Scenario A: We ask The University for this amount.

Scenario B: We apply for a grant to cover this amount.

Scenario C: We use student employee efforts as work-study, which reduces this total by \$405.00, and ask The University for the remainder.

X. TIMETABLE/MILESTONES

The projected start date for the weblink to be accessible with the relocation and updated resources would optimally be Fall Semester 2022. Project planning is broken down into a timetable of tasks that describe the scope of the proposal that will be sent to the Provost's Office for approval.⁷⁵ If any of these are not met, this may delay the anticipated start date for the weblink to go live.

⁷⁵ APPENDIX A

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

Timetable	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Participant	Provost Office	Justin Mayer, Assistant Director OGS	Office of Research and Sponsored Programs	Web Designer	ODEI, MWGS, Provost, OGS
Task	Submit Proposal for Approval	Moving Graduate Resources on OGS & Updates	Discuss External Funding Opportunities	Restructure OGS Website	Annual Evaluation
Planned Start	5/1/2022	6/1/2022	6/1/2022	8/1/2022	8/1/2023

Figure 4. Timetable for planning revisions to Graduate Student Resources web link on OGS homepage.

XI. FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

Evaluating the effectiveness of the resource page after the initial year will need to be established. Criteria for this assessment will be set up and reviewed annually. Websites are more than ever a vital resource for our campus community. A unique component of a website resource is that it can be tailored and updated to the needs of targeted groups. Various features need to be considered when evaluating a website's usefulness. The first to consider is the ease of use for the intended audience of the site. We want the information to be located quickly with short loading times. The link must have an easily identifiable purpose that meets the needs of MWGS.

Working with the web designer to create the link on the OGS website will be essential to keep the link visually appealing. Resources added to the Graduate Students resources page would match the existing resources aligned with the UMB branding standards. The critical element is

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

that the content is simple and easy to use. Other criteria for site performance are ensuring no broken links and that the resources listed are all up to date.

Effective analytics packages can assist with tracking visitors to the linked resource site. The analytics we need for our purposes will show us the traffic to our resources. In addition, knowing how often the site is used will give UMB an idea of how often the site is being utilized by visitors and the duration of the site visits. The statistics obtained by this information will be vital in helping us understand how to proceed in promoting this resource. UMB uses analytic software for all University-sponsored sites and collects website tracking information. This analysis will measure the success of the intended purpose of creating a specialized resource of this nature.

A committee will review analytical information annually to measure the success of the intended purpose and make any necessary changes. The committee to conduct this review should represent an MWGS graduate student, representatives from the Provost/OGS offices, and a representative from the ODEI. The involvement of interested parties on campus with different points of view is imperative to the success of this endeavor, so the solution becomes visible to all this may impact. Collective intelligence organized in this way leads to real solutions from varying viewpoints to recognize the power of unifying perspectives.⁷⁶

Maintaining this website by a work-study candidate also introduces an opportunity for cross-cultural students to participate in mindful allyship objectives. By becoming associated with this project, these students or interns become invested in monitoring racial justice efforts in action. As a result of this work, I would like to help create an atmosphere at UMB that supports

⁷⁶ Arthur L. Costa. *Developing minds: A resource book for teaching thinking*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, (ASCD 1985) 127.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

challenging set paradigms that may no longer work optimally for present-day needs for inclusivity. My intended role is to support initiatives that move into an allied space while navigating a shared responsibility to create inclusive paradigms.

The future of this proposal holds many opportunities for UMB to engage its graduate student body. One possibility could be to dedicate a site much like UW has designed to centralize resources for diverse student bodies. Such a site can be used everywhere on campus. Academic departments can utilize departmental graduate program coordinators & directors to promote this resource. MWGS are also a key source of information in creating a website such as this and can be engaged through student interest groups and the Graduate Student Union. There are many promising avenues in the future of diversity in action at UMB. This development phase will require critical thinking by all those involved in the UMB niche. I hope that avenues for change continue to evolve; and perhaps that can begin with a simple restructure of an existing website to become more inclusive.

XII. CONCLUSION

The intent of this synthesis was to make clear the rationale of centralizing resources that promote inclusivity for Multicultural Women Graduate Students. I have described the barriers that may be presented when one steps into a pre-existing system that was not originally designed to embrace multicultural perspectives. Thankfully, we are equipped at UMB with the resources to take actionable steps to remedy antiquated systems that are not in alignment with the direction the UMB Mission Statement is propelling us towards. The impetus of this text was to make viable the spirit of continuous improvement. As a Reflective Practitioner, I have evaluated the changes needed to improve existing systems, and therefore lives, for the better. Working at UMB

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

allows me to continue to look for new interventions and ways of approaching issues on campus. Awareness in this capacity has been a life-changing process for me to take ownership of a thought process that directly impacts my perceptions and behaviors. I am excited as I know my educational journey does not stop here.

Asking for existing resources to be included with other graduate resources for Multicultural Women can catalyze further change at UMB by setting critical thinking in motion. Critical thinking empowers all UMB community members to focus on the systems around us and collectively look for solutions. It begins with personal interests and becomes a ripple effect throughout our communities for the betterment of humankind by working together to solve problems. May this be an invitation for us all to look around and see who we are leaving behind by not thinking critically. Those who are invested in higher education must continue to examine the status quo for inherited educational inefficiencies. These are practical and necessary steps to put the ideals of the UMB's Mission Statement into actionable steps and not just hopeful words.

It is now the spring of 2022, and I am in my last semester of graduate school. I reflect on my educational experience and embrace a sense of accomplishment. It would be thoughtless to entertain for a second that I achieved my success independently. I see many familiar faces on that path of the people who guided, empowered, and challenged me in ways that now shape the person that I am today. I honor my educators and mentors who nudged me here by doing the same for the next woman who feels she cannot do it alone. In some respects, completing my Master's degree is for the woman about to embark on her educational journey. It is a testament to her that this task is possible, and I know that there are people and resources to help get there. If one woman is not succeeding, none of us are, and for this I will remain forever vigilant in extending my hand to the women who need it.

GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

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GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

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GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL WOMEN

APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL LETTER

Joseph Berger, PhD
Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

Dear Dr. Berger,

This proposal asks for the opportunity to revise the Graduate Resource link on the Office of Graduate Studies website to include women's and multicultural resources. This updated web link on the OGS site will provide resources with an emphasis on on-campus resources for Multicultural Women Graduate Students completing a graduate degree at a UMB. The need for creating a restructured Graduate Resources weblink on the Office of Graduate Studies website is to recognize that a double-bind experience of navigating both gender and race barriers exists for m Multicultural Women Graduate Students. Navigating gender and racial inequalities creates a double bind experience of stress within a dominant academic culture that reinforces isolation, intersectional barriers, microaggressions, and pressure to assimilate to the dominant culture. A display of University acknowledgment of these experiences helps to create and foster a supportive academic environment that supports student retention.

The weblink on the Office of Graduate Studies for Graduate Resources is currently listed under “Graduate Students and Assistantships.” This list links to necessary campus resources such as the Counseling Center, research opportunities, The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee. Unfortunately, there are not any weblinks to Multicultural Affairs or the Women's Center on this resource page. I would like to see the OGS move the Graduate Resources link from the present location under Assistantships to the home page of the OGS website for ease of access. In addition, seven existing UMB web resources would be beneficial to be added to this weblink for the aide of all graduate students, but in particular Multicultural Women Graduate Students. The links to add are: UMB Women’s Center, Student Multicultural Affairs, UMB Mental Health, Wellness, and Staying Safe from Violence, UMB Anti-Racism Resources, UMB Here4U, UMB U-Access, and the Support Resources for the UMB Community.

As we embark upon a new era to become a “University of the Times”, it is essential we look for the non-inclusive paradigms around us. We are provided with an opportunity as this request lines up with a need to update all UMB websites to reflect our new logo. This presents an ideal time to make this change to the Office of Graduate Studies website.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you, sharing more ideas, and helping in any way I can.

Sincerely,

Annie McCluskey
Critical & Creative Thinking Graduate Student (CEHD 22’)

APPENDIX B: UMB MISSION STATEMENT

UMB Mission Statement

The University of Massachusetts Boston is a public research university with a dynamic culture of teaching and learning, and a special commitment to urban and global engagement. Our vibrant, multi-cultural educational environment encourages our broadly diverse campus community to thrive and succeed. Our distinguished scholarship, dedicated teaching, and engaged public service are mutually reinforcing, creating new knowledge while serving the public good of our city, our commonwealth, our nation, and our world.