



# 100 Black Women Professors NOW

*100 Black Women Professors NOW (100B) is for academic institutions looking to take accountability and deliver lasting change by taking a talent led, sustainable and systemic approach*

In 2018 there were 25 black women professors compared with 12,500 white men (Advance HE, 2018). A UCU report, 'Staying Power' (Rollock, 2019), captured the experiences of 80% of these professors and presented clear and specific actions that were recommended to deliver change. The report demonstrated a strong need to address deep-rooted barriers to attracting and retaining diverse talent in the UK's education system. Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are essential for good research practice and integrity, and to support a positive research culture.

Many black women within academia reported feeling "overworked and undervalued" and that they experienced "no recognition" for their work. They raised questions such as, "why should I stick around if there's a better opportunity elsewhere?"

In response, WHEN launched the 100B initiative, dedicated to bringing about systemic change by supporting black women with career progression throughout the academic pipeline, thus increasing black female representation and diversity across the scholarly ecosystem.

## How does 100B work?

WHEN founded 100B to support black women in academia with navigating and managing their careers, and to challenge and educate academic institutions on systemic barriers that can prevent black women from thriving and progressing. The aim is to increase the number of black women professors in the UK - to reach 100 - and to have created a better culture for black women and all under-represented groups progressing through the academic system.

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*"Black women do not need 'fixing'. This is about addressing deep-rooted biases, systems, patterns and behaviours." - WHEN*

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The programme works with senior leaders, line managers and key policy owners as well as bringing together peer groups from multiple universities to facilitate cross-institution learning and accountability. Participating institutions carry out various in-person activities such as workshops, peer group coaching, career coaching and action learning.

Using core change principles, institutions can unblock limiting systems and structures, and support the academic cohort to successfully navigate the pathway to professorship.

Through participation in the programme, institutions can improve the way in which they acknowledge work carried out by black women academics and learn how to ensure care and respect to all their researchers with equity. The programme provides universities with the opportunity to tackle their diversity issues with transparency, being open about the barriers that may exist and how they will seek to address them.

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*"Working with the black women academics on our pilot programme has been a privilege for me. It has made me realise the great potential within these women and how fortunate we are to have them still with us despite the challenges they have experienced. What I really hope is that this is the start of sustained positive change for them, for our university and the wider sector." - Professor Louise Bryant, Dean for EDI, University of Leeds*

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## Why should an institution get involved with 100B?

WHEN asked institutional leaders involved in the pilot a series of questions to understand the impact of the programme from an institutional and leadership perspective<sup>1</sup>:

- 100%** Said the programme has made them more aware of the experiences of black women academics in their university.
- 95%** Said they would recommend that other universities participate in the programme.
- 80%** Said the programme had supported them to identify actions that can change the status quo.
- 79%** Said the programme contributed to increasing their understanding of race and issues to do with racial justice in the workplace.
- 73%** Said that the programme made them a more effective and inclusive leader.
- 21%** Said that the programme had already increased the university's capacity for strategic change, with the rest saying it was too early to tell.

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*"Piloting this programme at the University of Leeds demonstrates our commitment to living our values of Collaboration, Compassion, Inclusivity and Integrity. By honouring the lived experiences of the women who took part in the pilot, we acknowledge the structural challenges that contribute to the glaring inequities in our sector. The programme has also helped us to co-create a solutions-focused collaborative space for us to determine and design the future we want for and with Black female academics in Higher Education. I am both humbled and excited to be part of that journey and delighted in the gift of our growing 'sista-circle', a community of care where past and present participants connect with each other to heal, grow, share support." - Dr. Kendi Guantai, Dean for EDI, University of Leeds*

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## Unblocking talent pipelines

Following participation in the pilot, WHEN found the following impact on black women academics<sup>2</sup>:

- 70%** of the cohort felt the programme changed their attitude about their future career.
- 70%** of the cohort felt the programme had accelerated their career progression.
- 65%** of the cohort had considered leaving academia, however **85%** of those women said they are more likely to remain now because of the programme.
- ~33%** of the cohort said they are better able to imagine themselves in more senior positions since joining the programme and that they are planning to apply for a promotion or new role.

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*"It has given me the confidence to speak up and be seen in a job I really love." - Dr Paulet Brown-Wilsher* "I now have the understanding and importance of organisational politics and strategies for career progression." -  
*Dr Jummy Okoya*

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As of 2024, WHEN has partnered with 14 institutions, supported 160 black women and empowered 200 leaders as change makers. Since its inception the number of Black women professors in the sector has more than doubled. The programme continues to evolve based on learnings and feedback from the cohort, academics and institutions.

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*"This programme is the most effective career development programme that I have had the pleasure of being involved in. By engaging the key stakeholders, leaders have the power to change the status quo and focus on addressing structural deficits." - Professor Marcia Wilson, Dean for EDI, The Open University*

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For more information, visit [www.whenequality.org/](http://www.whenequality.org/)

<sup>1</sup> In December 2022, WHEN surveyed 19 institutional leaders from across the six institutions participating in the pilot.

<sup>2</sup> In December 2022, WHEN surveyed 20 of the 30 participants about the impact of the pilot programme.