

September 20, 2000

TO: Provost Edward J. Ray
FROM: Deborah Merritt, Chair of Committee on Affirmative Action
RE: Committee Recommendations for Fall Quarter

In your charge to the Affirmative Action Committee in May, you asked us both to consider long-term strategies to support the University's commitment to affirmative action and to recommend ideas that might be implemented beginning in Fall Quarter 2000. In this memo, I report the committee's recommendations for programs the University could begin implementing this fall. We have already assembled considerable data about long-term strategies and continue to examine those strategies.

The committee studied the Diversity Plan and strongly supports that overall plan. All of our current recommendations build upon that plan. We do not, however, view our recommendations as a complete prescription for implementing the Diversity Plan. We understand that other committees and administrators will be charged with that task. We focus here on a set of initiatives that we believe will increase diversity on campus while also (1) building support for the University's commitment to affirmative action, and (2) establishing a foundation for programs that do not rely upon traditional affirmative action principles if legal developments force the University to abandon those principles. We perceive the latter two criteria as the distinctive charge of our committee.

Overview

Our recommendations focus on five pressing needs: (1) making clear the University's commitment to affirmative action; (2) developing a system of accountability in all areas related to affirmative action; (3) improving retention of African American and Latino/a undergraduates; (4) increasing racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among faculty members in departments lacking that diversity ; and (5) creating a dialogue among all members of the University community to foster understanding of and support for the University's commitment to affirmative action.

Dozens of other initiatives are essential to insure diversity at Ohio State. It is crucial, for example, to increase racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among graduate students in many departments, as well as to build campus supports for other diverse populations (such as disabled students and faculty or gay/lesbian/bisexual campus members). The five target areas we identify here, however, are especially pressing. In addition, addressing these needs will assist in reaching other goals. Thus, we see the five building blocks identified below as the best "first steps" for securing a strong

commitment to affirmative action at Ohio State. We have also focused here on steps that we believe would lay a firm foundation for building diversity at Ohio State if legal developments forced the University to abandon any consideration of race, gender, or other characteristics in its admissions, hiring, and other actions.

We discuss each of the initiatives separately, although we also point out the ways in which they are interrelated. These interconnections reinforce our sense that these are the best foundation upon which to build other initiatives related to affirmative action.

I. Make Clear the University's Commitment to Affirmative Action

The committee was impressed with the University's commitment to affirmative action, as well as by the broad range of programs already in existence. This news, however, tends to get lost at a University as large as Ohio State. The committee believes it is essential to feature Ohio State's commitment to both diversity and affirmative action as boldly as possible.

This initiative would be easy to accomplish during Fall Quarter. Indeed, we believe many steps in this direction already are underway. A new diversity website is being prepared; the committee has previewed that website and is excited about its potential. We also responded to a request from the President's Office to share information about existing affirmative action programs so that the data could be included in a briefing book for the President.

We recommend continuing these steps as vigorously as possible. We understand that a button on the University's homepage will lead viewers directly to the diversity site; we believe that ease of entry is essential. The diversity webpage could be developed further to include additional documents showing the University's support for affirmative action (such as op ed pieces written by President Kirwan and other University administrators), as well as information about why affirmative action is necessary. Links in the latter category could include scholarly studies of persistent racism and sexism, studies showing the positive effects of diversity in the classroom, and interactive sites that allow visitors to consider their own attitudes. Yale University, for example, maintains a site that allows visitors to test their own unconscious attitudes on race, gender, and age. We have attached as Appendix A a brief list of that website and other sites with information about affirmative action research. We have also shared this list with the team developing our own diversity webpage.

In addition to continuing work on our website, it is essential to feature diversity and consider the needs of underrepresented groups in all communications from the University. This includes obvious points, such as representing minority women, minority men, and white women in photographs of successful students and faculty, but it also includes more subtle points such as considering the needs of those individuals in designing communications. If minority women, minority men, and white women have concerns that differ from those of white men, we need to identify those concerns and

address them routinely in University communications if we want to recruit individuals from those groups to campus as students, staff, or faculty.

The current legal climate, with legal challenges pending against the University of Michigan's affirmative action programs, makes it especially important for the University to take a strong stand in favor of our own programs. We should set the agenda on diversity, not react to attacks from outside groups. Communicating the University's support for affirmative action, together with information about why affirmative action is necessary, is the best way to build support for affirmative action at our University and elsewhere. Several universities, moreover, have received very favorable press for taking strong stands in favor of affirmative action. The University of Michigan has remained firm in its support for its admissions programs—and has received credit for that stance—and MIT was very well received for its aggressive response to the report documenting widespread discrimination against women.

Indeed, communications initiatives are likely to become more important if the legal rules governing affirmative action change. The courts may rule that universities can no longer consider race in admissions or hiring—but that will not mean that universities cannot feature minority women, minority men, and white women in their publications or that our communications cannot communicate our strong support for a diverse campus climate. In a post-affirmative action world, these communications will be essential to attract and retain diverse students, faculty, and staff. Designing those communications now will allow us to make that transition, if legal rules force the transition upon us.

This step, finally, would strongly reinforce the other initiatives we recommend. Communicating the University's strong commitment to affirmative action would help establish systems of accountability (recommendation 2), retain African American and Latino/a undergraduates (recommendation 3), and increase racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among departmental faculty (recommendation 4). Bold dissemination of this message would also inform dialogues about affirmative action among campus members (recommendation 5).

II. Develop Strong Systems of Accountability

The Diversity Plan recommends that the University hold members of the campus community accountable for diversity in hiring, admissions, and other aspects of campus life. The committee strongly endorses those recommendations as an essential “first step” in achieving affirmative action goals. The University should start building systems of accountability this fall, both so the University can track its success more effectively and to send a strong signal about the importance of affirmative action to all members of the campus community. The committee understands that the process of designing these systems is already underway.

We believe that expectations related to affirmative action goals should be stated clearly and that consequences for failure to pursue those goals earnestly should be widely

known and effectively applied. Administrators, in particular, should understand clearly the costs of failing to comply with affirmative action goals. Will department funds be lost? Will administrators' salaries be affected? How will good faith efforts be measured and taken into account if goals are not met?

We also think it would be useful to adopt a very specific tracking system that audits the success of units. This type of system provides feedback to the units, while also helping the University track success (and failure). We have attached as Appendix B a copy of one system of this type, used by the University of Wisconsin.

Accountability is at the foundation of all of our other recommendations. In a University this large, actions occur in many decentralized locations. Without accountability, affirmative action will always slip through the cracks. If the University takes no other steps this fall, implementing specific systems of accountability would be a major step toward achieving affirmative action goals.

III. Improve Retention of African American and Latino/a Undergraduates

Many steps could be taken to improve the recruiting and retention of minority students at both the undergraduate and graduate level, as well as of female and other diverse students in many departments. The committee, however, believes that the most pressing current need lies in the retention of African American and Latino/a undergraduates. The University already is moderately successful in recruiting those undergraduates, but retention rates are dangerously low. For the class that entered in Autumn 1994 (the most recent figures available), the five-year graduation rate was 49.0% for white, non Latino/a students and 52.8% for Asian American students, but only 30.2% for Latino/a students and 33.7% for African American students.¹ Pressing issues, especially involving climate, exist for all minority students at the University, but we believe that retention of African American and Latino/a undergraduates is especially pressing at this time.

These low retention rates for African American and Latino/a undergraduates both undercut the University's overall goal of maintaining a diverse student body and create a dangerous climate of failure for minority students, faculty, and staff on campus.² That climate affects recruiting and retention of minority faculty, as well as the experience of many minority students who do remain on campus through graduation. Low retention rates also feed anti-affirmative action sentiments on campus by suggesting that affirmative action programs are wasteful. The same attitudes arise among the public.

¹ The number of Native American students enrolled at the University is very small; the committee did not obtain graduation rates for those students.

² Although we believe retention efforts should focus on African American and Latino/a undergraduates, the group showing the lowest graduation rates, we believe these efforts will help enhance the campus climate for all minority groups—as well as for white students, staff, and faculty--by demonstrating the University's commitment to maintaining a diverse community. The most important effect, of course, will be for the retained students themselves.

Increasing the retention of African American and Latino/a students will strike at the heart of many problems associated with diversity and affirmative action on campus.

The committee recognizes that recruiting and retention of students are strongly linked. If the University can attract better prepared African American and Latino/a students (such as through the offer of minority scholarships), then it is easier to retain those students. By focusing on retention, we do not mean to dismiss efforts to improve recruiting. Indeed, we hope that the University will improve its recruiting of all minority students and will design programs to achieve those ends this year. We focus here on retention because of its special relationship to diversity if we must move to a “post *Bakke* world.”

If the University must abandon traditional forms of affirmative action in admissions, retaining admitted students will become even more imperative. The University’s record in retaining minority students, moreover, is likely to become very important in recruiting minority students without traditional affirmative action supports. High retention rates show that the University really cares about minority students, and invests in them; that affects our recruiting now and will affect it even more if we must abandon race-based scholarships and other ways of recruiting minority students.

Perhaps most important, many alternatives to affirmative action involve bringing large numbers of students with poor high school backgrounds to campus. Programs focused on students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, for example, admit students with the limited training public schools in those areas often provide. Ironically, minority students with stronger high school training often are excluded under these programs. Similarly, programs like the Texas “ten percent solution” admit large numbers of students—both white and minority—from academically deprived schools. Texas and other schools have found that the need for academic support programs increasing retention is even more important without traditional forms of affirmative action than with it. Retention, in other words, is a crucial issue now and may become even more essential in the future. Now is the time to begin strengthening those programs.

Retention involves a broad complex of issues, including academic support, financial aid, and climate. As a first step, the committee would focus on academic support for African American and Latino/a undergraduates needing that support. Academic success is at the very heart of retention. Improving that success will provide an initial boost to climate for the reasons described above. It will also help address financial aid, as students retain eligibility for scholarships or establish sufficient success in the classroom to allow part-time work.

We recommend focusing first on undergraduates for two reasons. First, this is the largest group of students needing support so it is the area in which the University can make the most difference. Second, establishing strong academic support programs to increase retention of undergraduates will send a strong signal to departments about the need to retain African American and Latino/a graduate students. Retention issues for graduate students seem to differ more by department than those for undergraduates do. It

may be productive for departments to begin examining their own retention issues with African American and Latino/a graduate students, within a University context that has established a strong commitment to retaining African American and Latino/a undergraduates. We would encourage a strong central commitment to retaining graduate students within the next year or two, but we believe programs for undergraduates will provide the best first step.

Following the same reasoning, some may suggest that the University should push this “first step” even further back by supporting educational improvements in primary and secondary schools. We strongly support those efforts, but believe they should not come at the cost of academic support for undergraduates already admitted to the University. Establishing a firm commitment to minority students who are already on campus will strengthen the University’s credibility in outreach programs to primary and secondary schools. Providing academic support for today’s college students will also inform those outreach programs by making clear the areas in which students need stronger preparation.

Our committee lacks the expertise to recommend specific approaches to improving academic support for African American and Latino/a students. We recommend that the University begin by reviewing existing programs, deciding whether those programs are effective (and/or would benefit from further investment) or should be replaced with new approaches (with funds reinvested in those new programs). The Office of Minority Affairs, for example, already operates a mentoring program for minority undergraduates. A first step might be expert evaluation of that program and the commitment of funds to enhance it. Regular workshops focused on study skills, coping skills, and skills for success might also help efforts in this area. Based on the success of efforts this academic year, the program could be expanded next year.

We also recommend that the University begin planning now for low- or no-cost academic bridge programs in summer 2001. At other universities, these programs have been quite successful in making sure that African American and Latino/a students succeed. Our own Term One has proved successful for the small group of students included in that program; we might consider expanding that program.

In recommending that the University invest in academic support to enhance retention of African American and Latino/a students, we recognize that these programs are costly and that success can be difficult to achieve. The experience of universities that have been forced to abandon affirmative action in admissions and scholarships, however, strongly counsels investing in academic retention now. Those programs will benefit students currently on campus and will become even more essential if traditional forms of affirmative action end.

IV. Increase Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Diversity Among Faculty in Departments Lacking that Diversity

In many departments, increasing the percentage of minority women, minority men, and/or white women on the faculty is essential to achieving the University's other diversity goals. Without a diverse faculty, the University's commitment to affirmative action rings hollow, retention of a diverse student body is difficult, and the promotion of a constructive dialogue about affirmative action is problematic. Increasing faculty diversity thus is key to the other goals listed here and in the Diversity Plan.

As noted above, accountability is essential to increasing diversity in faculty hiring. In addition, we recommend two specific initiatives that we believe will bolster this accountability. First, in addition to other accountability systems, we believe that the Provost and Vice Provost for Minority Affairs should meet during the fall quarter with each College Dean to discuss the content of that College's Diversity Plan and the College's strategies for achieving goals laid out in the plan. We recommend that discussions should focus on at least these issues:

1. Strategies for increasing representation of minority women, minority men, and white women on departmental faculties, based on each department's need for additional diversity and the availability of individuals from these groups in relevant pools. Both recruiting and retention should be addressed. In recruitment, Colleges should be pressed to consider the ways in which they have defined positions. Pools of minority women, minority men, and white women are larger in some subfields than others. We note that in some departments, the need for increased percentages of minority women may be particularly acute. Discussion should also focus on specific strategies for retention, including mentoring and climate.
2. Development of a plan to increase hiring pools where those pools are small.
3. Assurance that all staff have participated appropriately in sexual harassment training and in diversity training.
4. Presentation and response to climate surveys.

A similar meeting should be held during the spring quarter to address each College's progress on its diversity goals. That progress should also be documented in an annual report.

Second, the committee recommends investment in the recently proposed Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in the Americas. This proposal is attractive for at least five reasons:

- (1) It illustrates to departments how fields can be defined in a way that will attract minority scholars, and creates an incentive for departments to do that. A department planning to hire a media expert, for example, might consider hiring an expert who has focused on the relationship between minorities and the media. A search for an expert in a particular health field might focus on a scholar who specializes in the unique experience of minority patients in that field, in addition to having a general expertise in the field.
- (2) It dramatically demonstrates the concept that minority hiring is associated with academic quality. The proposal for this Institute makes an excellent case that Ohio State can enhance its academic reputation by building an interdisciplinary Institute in this field. Indeed, the Institute advances the goals identified in the University's new Academic Plan. As departments see the relationship between this Institute and the University's academic goals, attitudes will shift to embrace minority hiring as consistent with (indeed, as an enhancer of) academic quality and departmental reputation.
- (3) The interdisciplinary Institute will help recruit and retain top faculty members and graduate students to campus. Departmental goals under new systems of accountability will be somewhat easier to attain.
- (4) The Institute will also provide a "carrot" to departments at the same time that they face the "stick" of accountability, because some funding for these positions should be provided centrally.
- (5) The Institute provides a foundation for other types of faculty recruiting and retention if legal considerations force us to abandon affirmative action. Because the Institute is defined by subject matter, rather than by the race of individuals holding appointments in the institute, it would survive challenges in a legal world hostile to affirmative action. Starting to build the Institute now would give the University a firm basis for recruiting and retaining minority faculty in an uncertain legal future.

In using the Race Institute as a way both to support accountability and to improve faculty diversity directly, the committee offers two caveats. First, the Institute may be sufficiently attractive that departments will focus much more strongly on hiring minority faculty than female faculty. The pool of talented minority females is large, and minority women currently may be particularly underrepresented on some faculties, so a conflict may not arise. Many departments, however, are as deficient in hiring white female faculty as minority men and women. Some care should be taken to insure that departments are held accountable for increasing all types of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity.

Second, funding for the Institute should strike a middle ground between centralized and departmental funding. Substantial support, including money for new faculty lines, should come from the central administration to (1) show a strong

commitment to the Institute and minority hiring, (2) allow the development of a top-quality Institute that will achieve the intended reputational gains for the University, and (3) provide some incentive to departments who lag behind in minority hiring. On the other hand, most appointments should be made on a cost sharing basis so that departments do not believe that the central administration will “take care of” hiring minority faculty for them. Cost sharing will also encourage departments to define existing searches in ways that are particularly inclusive of fields that attract minority scholars.

V. Create a Dialogue About Affirmative Action

The Diversity Action Plan and this report place a premium on creative decision-making with respect to issues of diversity and affirmative action. More effective discourse will help with these goals; the committee believes it is essential to create a dialogue about affirmative action. The SRI Report on the Retention of Women and Minority Faculty and Staff also stressed improved discourse as one of its key recommendations. Those report authors made it clear that we need to learn to more effectively reach common ground on issues that involve our deeply held values. We should take advantage of the richness inherent in our diversity by sharing and capitalizing upon our differing worldviews and experiences. We must learn how to learn about our differences, and then use what we learn to enhance our educational, social, and political environments. Our proposal to create a dialogue about affirmative action represents a realistic first step in that direction.

Specifically, the committee recommends a modified version of a program operated successfully by the Association of American Law Schools. In that program, a consultant and corps of trained facilitators are available to law deans who need assistance developing constructive discussions on divisive issues. This corps of consultants assists with the process of moving from problem identification to the development of productive, tangible outcomes. The consultants aim to have both the process and the outcomes characterized by a spirit of candor, respect, and openness.

On this campus, we recommend that the Provost appoint a resource corps of Ohio State administrators, faculty, staff, and students who are willing to work with campus leaders needing assistance in the development of constructive discussions and strategic planning around issues of diversity and affirmative action. We also recommend that the Provost engage a consultant, ideally an experienced administrator with expertise in facilitating meetings on difficult issues. The consultant should serve as a sounding board for the new resource corps, a trainer for that group, and an initial guide for campus leaders seeking assistance. Together with the resource corps, the consultant should guide the development of training, coaching, and program marketing materials. While voluntary participation in the program would be ideal, the program might also serve as a performance management coaching tool for supervisors.

Conclusion

Increasing diversity and improving support for affirmative action are daunting tasks. The Diversity Plan, however, provides an excellent blueprint for achieving those goals. Ohio State, moreover, is fortunate in having key central administrators committed to diversity. The committee believes that the initiatives outlined above will achieve significant, measurable gains during the coming academic year. At the same time, these are initiatives that will both build a strong foundation for additional programs and lay the groundwork for new approaches if legal developments force the University to abandon traditional affirmative action principles.

The committee will continue its work throughout the fall quarter, continuing to compile information about affirmative action alternatives at other universities and to develop recommendations about building support for affirmative action at Ohio State. Meanwhile, we hope these recommendations respond to your initial request for initiatives that could be implemented beginning in the fall quarter. The committee would be very happy to meet with you if you would like to discuss the recommendations in this report or provide other feedback to guide us this quarter. Please let me know if you would like to arrange a meeting.

Current Committee Members and Resource Persons

Carole Anderson	(Dean, College of Nursing)
Crystal Coleman	(Professional Student)
Elizabeth Conlisk	(Director, Media Relations)
Andre Dailey	(Affirmative Action Coordinator)
Donna Evans	(Dean, College of Education)
Robert Gold	(Dean, College of Mathematical and Physical Sciences)
Susan Hartmann	(Professor, History and Women's Studies)
Allyson Lowe	(Graduate Student)
Jim Mager	(Assistant Vice President, Enrollment Services)
Richard Marshall	(Undergraduate Student)
Steven McDonald	(Associate Legal Counsel, Office of Legal Affairs)
Deborah Merritt	(Interim Director, Glenn Institute)
Jennifer Otero	(Undergraduate Student)
Rebecca Parker	(Director, Student Unions)
Nancy Rogers	(Vice Provost for Academic Administration)
Mac Stewart	(Vice Provost for Minority Affairs)
Lee Tashjian	(Vice President for University Relations)
Derrick White	(Graduate Student)

Appendix A: Web Sites Related to Affirmative Action

- 1) <http://aad.english.ucsb.edu/> The Affirmative Action and Diversity Project: A Web Page for Research. This page has lots of information, as well as links to other affirmative action sites. It is kept quite up to date.
- 2) <http://www.auaa.org/> The Definitive "Cyber-Primer" About AUAA AA News. This site has a useful collection of materials, and serves as a model for how affirmative action materials can be linked. The site, though, is somewhat out of date; it was last updated in 1997.
- 3) <http://www.ssnewslink.com/link/affirmativeaction.html> Affirmative Action Public Sites. This site provides links to several other sites with extensive information on affirmative action.
- 4) http://www.uri.edu/affirmative_action University of Rhode Island Affirmative Action page. This website, maintained by another university, has links to many other web sites related to diversity or affirmative action.
- 5) <http://buster.cs.yale.edu/implicit/index.html> This site allows visitors to measure their own "implicit attitudes" or stereotypes relating to age, race, and gender. The site, maintained by scientists at Yale University and the University of Washington, also has links to research related to their measurement of stereotypes.

**Appendix B: Sample Tracking Forms
from the University of Wisconsin**