

Memorandum

To: Mac Stewart, Vice Provost and Chief Diversity Officer
CC: University Diversity Council Members
From: Valerie Lee, Chair, The Ohio State University Council on Diversity
Date: 11/26/08
Re: 2007 Summary Report

Background

In October 2000 The Ohio State University adopted “The Academic Plan,” a plan designed to serve as a blueprint for building academic excellence. One strategy that The Academic Plan detailed as a building block to achieve its goal was to “create a diverse university community.” To integrate diversity as part of its academic mission, the University adopted a complementary plan, The Diversity Action Plan, at the same time that it adopted The Academic Plan. To implement the Diversity Action Plan, OSU appointed its first University-wide Council on Diversity. The Council’s charge was to:

- Advise the President and Provost on the implementation of the University’s Diversity Action Plan;
- Make recommendations that will enable the University to foster a campus climate of inclusion;
- Solicit views of the University community on all aspects of diversity;
- Examine specific concerns advanced by minority advocates;
- Identify potential new initiatives that will advance our diversity goals; and
- Report annually to the President and Provost on progress in achieving measurably greater diversity in institutional composition and the richness of the educational environment.

Since its inception, the University Council on Diversity has written six reports, dating from February 5, 2002 through June 8, 2006 and covering the academic years FY01 – FY06. For this, the seventh report, rather than an institutional unit-by-unit audit based on written reports received in response to a uniform assessment template, this report responds foremost to site visits that the University Council on Diversity had with nearly all of the colleges and professional offices on campus. Council members centered the site visit discussions around the following questions:

The Present: The Unit's Climate

- How are diversity efforts defined and perceived within your unit?
- What barriers impede your diversity efforts, both within the unit and the University at large?

The Past: The Unit's Reports

- What underlying philosophy determines the type of diversity programming that your unit has engaged in over the years?
- What was your most satisfying diversity effort and what made it so?

The Future: Diversity Action Plan II

- In what directions should OSU take its future diversity efforts?
- How should we measure our success?

Procedures for Site Visits

The members of the University Council on Diversity collaborated with the Diversity Leadership Group and with past members of the University Council on Diversity to form approximately forty teams of three persons each. These teams visited the academic departments, the OAA units, the Professional units, the Vice Presidential units, and the regional campuses. Units were given the discussion questions ahead of time and could elect to have present at the meeting any representatives of their choosing. For the academic units, the Deans were present with their Diversity Committees, Executive Committees, and/or programmatic leaders. Other units convened their top administrators, and anyone charged with monitoring diversity initiatives.

All units expressed appreciation for these face-to-face dialogues and were assured that this report would not single out individual unit shortcomings, allowing for a more honest exchange of ideas.

What The Council Learned from the 2007 Site Visits:

On the definition of diversity:

There was no across-the-board definition of diversity. As a term, "diversity" is highly contextual. Some units argued that any "richness of experience" should count as diversity, while other units argued that the emphasis should be on targeted groups that have not had access to certain types of opportunities. Discussions thereby ranged from those who wanted to include any "diversity of thought" to those who wanted diversity to be tied to issues of social justice. In addition to the underrepresented groups already defined in the current Diversity Action Plan, the two additional groups that received the most support for inclusion in a new Diversity Plan are international students and faculty and students and faculty with disabilities. Many recommend a rethinking and public discussion of both the meaning of diversity and its value to OSU. Since we can not do everything at once both central policy and individual unit practices will have to focus on subgroups, from setting the benchmarks necessary to

evaluate progress to planning "street level" programming. The institution should reformulate a core meaning of diversity and work on maintaining a dual focus on the practical and the ideal.

Site Visit Responses from the Units

OSU needs to:

- Articulate more convincingly that diversity matters and then act like it matters at all levels, including the highest level of the University.
- Provide more centralized funding of diversity initiatives.
- Build diversity initiatives across units.
- Integrate the concept of diversity into multiple messages.
- Build pathways and pipelines for diversity.
- Hire Deans who believe in the diversity efforts put forth by the University and who are willing to implement and support change.
- Encourage diversity in recruitment and re-appointment of key personnel.
- Make department chairs and faculty responsible for carrying out the goals and mission of the college's diversity action plan.
- Support Program Directors who have direct power and control over faculty reward systems.
- Incorporate diversity as part of scholarly activities and compensation.
- Develop a climate amongst faculty that they are invested in the success of all students.
- Address entrenched attitudes that negatively affect recruitment and retention of women and faculty of color.
- Restructure the SEI evaluation forms. Currently, no question measures diversity curricular or climate efforts (except, the broader question that asks whether the instructor treats the students fairly).
- Provide fellowships for minority students that offer more than one year's funding. The Graduate Enrichment Scholarship is only one year and sometimes colleges and departments are unable to provide additional years of funding for PhD students.
- Increase the incentive for hiring underrepresented groups. Different incentives may work for different colleges. The current FHAP program is insufficient for the needs of STEM fields.
- Establish from central funding a post-doctoral fellowship program for scholars from underrepresented groups who then might become candidates for permanent faculty positions.
- Recognize that minority students, staff and faculty members vary in their needs.

Note that the aforementioned action steps do not always specify *how* to accomplish the initiative or recommendation. This has been the challenge: What is the best way to implement a particular goal?

The following overarching observations gleaned by the University Council on Diversity from the 2000-2006 cumulative reports were fully supported by the discussions in the site visits:

What the Council Learned from Reports from 2000-2007:

- The accountability has been at the level of Deans. The University Council on Diversity feels that if progress is to be made, the level of accountability has to involve all levels of administration, most notably the chairs.
- There is a disconnect between institutional emphasis on diversity and grass-roots emphasis on diversity.
- The message that excellence and diversity are mutually constitutive needs to be reiterated as frequently as possible and in ways that are persuasive and concrete.
- Even as the University is engaging in diversity activities and making some actual gains, women, minorities, members of the GLBT population, and faculty and students with disabilities remain skeptical that there is a “real” commitment to diversity at OSU.
- Diversity at OSU seems to be improving at a quicker pace at the lower levels than at the higher levels. There are still many more men than women among the senior professoriate, and there are few minorities in top administrative positions. Continue programs designed to move faculty from underrepresented groups to administrative leadership positions.
- The Office of Business and Finance and the colleges need to work together to develop better strategies for tracking the use of minority vendors. Some units do not want to take extra steps in locating a minority vendor. Other units have difficulty identifying and quantifying the use of minority vendors.
- Most units still do not operate as if they know why it is in their best interest to be diverse.
- The one group that remains most underrepresented in all areas is the Native American population.
- The message of diversity needs to be more clearly articulated by senior level University administrators at every opportunity.
- There needs to be a funding initiative for research on diversity.
- There needs to be more of a recognition that changes in programming do not always lead to deep structural changes.
- Achieving diversity needs to become a criterion in the award structure. The consequences of not achieving diversity are not always clear.
- Units need to address the paucity of staff involvement in diversity, especially since staff outnumber faculty and play a critical role in making students feel at home in the University.
- There is unevenness in commitment across units.
- Benchmark for diversity in ways that the University benchmarks for other areas of excellence. Use diversity statistics from institutions with the best diversity records as a yardstick by which to measure our diversity efforts.
- The achievement of a goal of a truly diverse University community will require substantial investments of capital, labor, and trust.

At the end of seven years, 2000-2007, nearly all units of the University now have a Diversity Council at the college and/or departmental level. While these diversity committees have done much to increase programming about diversity, they also have created a need for better communication and organization.

Units have come to expect accountability in terms of diversity efforts. Over time, most units progressed from perfunctory reporting to substantive, honest reporting. A critical step in the process has been the participation of the Executive Vice President and Provost and the President. These top administrators received reports from the Council that they had on hand when meeting annually with each Dean. There have been cases where Deans have had to change their posture or unit activities, given reports from the Council. Some units have made remarkable progress in terms of their demographics.

In sum, as E. Gordon Gee has remarked, The Ohio State University is well positioned to move from “excellence to eminence.” If it plans to do so within the context and demands of a multicultural society, it will have to move from the mere programming of diversity and the casual rhetoric of diversity to embracing diversity as a core value—deeply rooted in the University’s culture, community, and character.