

Diversity ‘Best Practices’ Summary, July 2005

Diversity Action Council, Georgetown University

One of the charges of the Diversity Action Council (DAC) is to survey best practices around diversity and inclusion at our peer institutions of higher learning. This year, the DAC Assessment Committee has taken on this responsibility. In order to avoid duplicating the work of previous diversity task forces, the Committee reviewed the reports from major diversity initiatives produced at Georgetown University in the recent past (1996-2004). Studying the recommendations generated by these groups also informed the Committee about which practices would be most effective in propelling Georgetown forward on issues of diversity and inclusion. The sources of the recommendations in this document include

- recommendations of the 1997-98 Task Force for Enhancing Inclusiveness established by President Leo J. O’Donovan, S.J.;
- the final report and prioritized recommendations of the 2002 Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) evaluation team;
- recommendations of the 2004 Ad Hoc Discussion Group on Diversity in the Curriculum established by Provost James O’Donnell.
- The Diversity Action Council leadership

In addition, this summary draws upon the experience of other institutions that are similar to Georgetown in their commitment to academic excellence, their concern for social justice, or their student demographics. As each campus situation is unique, one effective way of identifying ‘best practices’ is to look for patterns of actions that have been successful at other institutions, focus on the general principles that characterize successful action, and adapt these practices to the particular needs of the Georgetown University institutional context and campus community. Accordingly, this outline is suggestive rather than explicit, and descriptive rather than prescriptive.

General principles of diversity ‘best practices’

The 1997-98 Task Force surveyed these 21 institutions for best practices related to diversity:

- Bryn Mawr College
- City University of New York/Queens College
- Harvard University
- Loyola Marymount University
- Marymount Manhattan College
- Mount St. Mary’s College
- Mount Union College
- Occidental College
- Pomona College
- Swarthmore College
- University of California at Berkeley
- University of California at Davis
- University of California at Irvine
- University of California at Riverside
- University of California at San Diego
- University of Maryland
- University of Miami
- University of Michigan
- University of Wisconsin
- Wellesley College
- Wesleyan University

The Task Force found that within this group of institutions, diversity efforts are enhanced through

- faculty buy-in and implementation in the classroom,
- student life programming, and
- campus-wide special events.

According to their final report, ‘the research of the Task Force has revealed that to be successful, diversity programming must (1) be incorporated into the central function of the institution (teaching); and (2) capitalize on institutional strengths. The Task Force [has] identified teaching, student programs, and volunteer and public service as institutional strengths [of Georgetown] upon which a program designed to enhance inclusiveness on campus could be built.’

Subsequently, a Hewlett Foundation grant provided the funds needed to develop and run the ‘Pluralism in Action’ program for new students, as well as the Faculty Seminar on Inclusive Teaching and Learning organized by the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), both of which have continued since 2001 with major funding from the Office of the Provost.

Georgetown University also has a history of sponsoring campus-wide events focused on diversity and inclusion, including International Week; Martin Luther King Day; Women’s History Month; Black History Month; Campus Ministry programs and religious observances for the holy days of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths. Some of the University departments that help the campus create a welcoming environment where all students can thrive include Campus Ministry, the Center for Minority Educational Affairs (CMEA), the LGBTQ Community Resources Coordinator, and the Women’s Center. The University supports student groups that represent a variety of cultural/racial heritages and religions. These student groups organize celebrations, commemorative events, speakers, and discussions throughout the year. In addition, Solidarity has focused on the issue of economic class on campus, while GU Pride has been a resource for the LGBTQ community.

At the same time, students from different backgrounds are expressing dissatisfaction, as we have seen in campus surveys and through isolated incidents of offensive behavior directed at racial or religious groups on campus over the past year or so. Thus we should applaud the efforts made to date, but realize that there is still much room for improvement in the general campus climate for diversity and inclusion. In this regard, the 2002 Middle State evaluation team recommended that Georgetown ‘build initiatives related to diversity and pluralism into all aspects of student co-curricular life (e.g., residence hall training and activities, leadership training and programs, community service and campus ministry programs). These initiatives must be at the core of student life and should not be perceived as “add on” or at the margins’ [Task Force on Students]. While we do have specific programming, campus events, and student groups related to diversity, then, we can and should continue our efforts to improve campus life outside the classroom.

Georgetown also has been less successful in getting faculty buy-in and consensus on things such as a diversity (course) requirement in the curriculum, faculty participation in voluntary diversity training, or broad attendance at the annual Faculty Seminar on Inclusive Teaching and Learning, held each May in conjunction with CNDLS’ summer institute. For that reason, the remainder of this outline focuses on the first of the ‘best practices’ identified: faculty development around inclusive teaching, and incorporating diversity into the curriculum.

Faculty buy-in and implementation in the classroom

Faculty involvement is a key element in improving the campus climate for inclusion and developing effective diversity programs. For purposes of this summary, we see faculty involvement as including

- incorporating inclusive teaching methods in the classroom,
- diversifying curricula in their own courses as well as within their departmental curricula,
- carrying out their own disciplinary research in areas with a focus on diversity,
- mentoring and advising a broad range of diverse students,
- participating in departmental or community service activities related to diversity and inclusion, and
- advising or participating in student groups or campus diversity activities.

The evaluation team representing the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that visited Georgetown University in March 2002 prioritized 25 of the over 100 recommendations made by the self-study task forces. Of the 25 Prioritized Recommendations appended to the evaluation team's report, three dealt specifically with diversity and inclusion as they relate to curricula and faculty. Each recommendation below is followed by promising models for improvement from other selective institutions of higher education.

Recommendation #1: Faculty Recruitment and Retention

Focusing on the diversity within our faculty itself, the evaluation team recommended that

- *Georgetown must continue efforts to recruit a diverse faculty, especially in departments where women and minorities are under-represented. These efforts should include implementation of the recommendations generated by the President's Working Group on Diversity. (Task Force on Faculty)*

Currently, the Office of Affirmative Action (OAA) works on three different levels to achieve a broader applicant pool for positions. The process begins with communications with the Office of the Provost regarding anticipated faculty openings for the coming year. This forms the basis for compiling appropriate recruitment sources, which the OAA passes on to the department and/or search committee chair at the department level. The third level involves working directly with the search committees to explore with them how to maximize their searches to achieve a broader applicant pool. Additionally, OAA prepares for the search committee a demographic profile of Georgetown that could be shared with the finalists to be interviewed.

Due to the highly individual nature of recruitment and hiring plans across institutions, few 'best practices' in this area can be suggested, beyond sincerity and diligence in searching out qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds in every disciplinary area. Some of the resources available to aid in such a search include:

- Stanford University created the Faculty Recruitment Office, a division of the Office of the Vice-Provost for Faculty Development. The office is directed by the Associate Vice-Provost for Faculty Development. The mission of the organization is "to assist new faculty as they transition to Stanford and to help the university realize its longstanding commitment to faculty diversity." The main activities of the office include assisting "deans, chairs, and faculty search committees with their outreach efforts in developing diverse and talented applicant pools, and [serving] as a centralized information resource for both prospective faculty and newly hired faculty in their transition to the Stanford community." (<http://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/mission.html>)

- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has instituted a Carolina Post Doctoral Program for Faculty Diversity as a positive step toward increasing minority representation among the institution's faculty. The program makes available two-year appointments for post doctoral research, which may lead to tenure-track appointments. Post doctoral appointments include stipends and health benefits, with some funding available for research expenses. (Report of the Chancellor's Task Force on Diversity, p. 14, <http://www.unc.edu/minorityaffairs/assessment/diversityreport.pdf>)
- AAC&U publications such as *Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees* (C. Turner, 2002), and *Achieving Faculty Diversity: Debunking the Myths* (D. Smith et al., 1996)

Recommendation #2: Curriculum Reform

A second recommendation made by the Middle States team dealt with support for faculty developing and teaching programs focused on diversity:

- *The University should expand its support for faculty and programs with a significant focus on justice, encourage more faculty to engage in the area, including emphasis on cultural diversity and multiculturalism. (Task Force on Educational Programs and Curricula)*

Successful initiatives from other institutions, which could be adapted to the Georgetown context include those at:

- Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, where students are required to take a class in "American Cultures" as part of their core curriculum requirements. Eligible courses "examine and compare the American experience of at least three of the following groups: African American, American Indian, Asian American, Chicana/o-Latino/a, and European American. The objective of these courses is to explore the contributions of these groups to human knowledge and development. Classes will also explore the varieties of cultural expression, behavior, and interaction." (http://registrar.lmu.edu/Bulletins/2004-05_Bulletin.pdf)
- Stanford University, where in order to satisfy the General Education Requirements, students must take two courses in "World Cultures, American Cultures, and Gender Studies." The two courses must cover two of these three general areas. (<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/registrar/bulletin/current/pdf/AcademicPolicy.pdf>)
- The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, which includes a Race & Ethnicity requirement in its core curriculum. Students are required to take one course "that deals on a fairly sophisticated level with topics such as the historical development of racism, and the social, political, and economic effects of racism and other types of discrimination." Classes in this category must discuss the meaning of race, ethnicity, and racism; racial intolerance in the U.S. and elsewhere; and comparisons of discriminations based on race, ethnicity, religion, social class and gender. (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/lsa/detail/0,2034,4341%255Farticle%255F181,00.html>)
- At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History, established in 1988, focuses on the interdisciplinary examination of African and African American lives, cultures, and histories. The Center's programs include public lectures, readings by authors and poets, a film festival, and an informal reading group. Its Cross-Cultural Communications Institute serves as a campus forum for discussions of ideas, issues, and initiatives about ethnic, cultural, racial, and other self-defined communities. (Report of the Chancellor's Task Force on Diversity, p. 10, <http://www.unc.edu/minorityaffairs/assessment/diversityreport.pdf>)

Recommendation #3: Faculty Development

Finally, the MSCHE evaluation team strongly urged faculty development around a number of issues, including diversity and inclusion in the classroom:

- *Faculty development efforts should be continued or instituted around the following:*
 - *Understanding and identifying different learning styles and traditions and interacting in the classroom with our increasingly diverse student population. (Task Force on Faculty)*

Since 2001, the Office of the Provost has funded the Faculty Seminar on Inclusive Teaching and Learning, a weeklong faculty development opportunity held every May. The goal of the seminar is to provide participants with an understanding of the interpersonal dynamics of teaching in diverse classrooms as well as teaching tools that incorporate and respect diversity in their classes. Topics range from racial identity awareness to learning style differences, cross-cultural communication, gender and GLBTQ issues, class, and learning and physical disabilities. Georgetown students are involved part of the time as a panel, as well as Georgetown faculty and staff who serve as guest presenters and resource persons. To date (2001-2005), 70 faculty and graduate students from 28 academic departments and units have participated in the IT&L, but ordinary faculty accounted for just over half of the total (51%), with adjunct/visiting faculty and graduate students making up 17% and 24% of the total, respectively. The remaining participants (8%) were University staff from offices including International Programs, Affirmative Action, and Residence Life.

Perhaps due to the time commitment required or the intensive nature of the week, it has been difficult to interest a broader segment of the full-time tenured faculty to participate. Georgetown needs to develop additional means of reaching faculty and educating them about inclusive teaching. Promising practices used by other institutions that might be adapted for use here include the following:

- The Faculty Handbook at Stanford University includes a section on teaching a diverse student body. The opening paragraph of the section states: “To teach effectively in such an environment, you’ll want to understand the varied backgrounds and experiences your students bring into your classroom and explore ways to foster an open, safe environment for all students. You may also find yourself examining some of your own unconscious assumptions. This is true whether what you teach falls into the humanities, the social sciences, or the sciences.” The section continues by citing related research conducted by Stanford’s own faculty that has implications for teaching in a diverse classroom, thus drawing from the faculty as on-campus resources for inclusive teaching.
(<http://ctl.stanford.edu/teach/handbook/diversity.html>)
- The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, staffs a Coordinator of Multicultural Teaching and Learning Services. The office offers seminars, consultations, collections of research studies and effective teaching strategies, and grants to faculty who want to foster increased inclusiveness in their classrooms.
(<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multiteaching/multiservices.html>)

Summary

In summary, then, the Assessment Committee found that promising practices regarding diversity and inclusiveness on university campuses require

- Broad and visible support from the institution’s top leadership, encompassing a strategic and coordinated allocation of resources (including financial, personnel, and institutional

authority) that would improve practices, policies, and programs in order to more effectively serve a diverse student body, faculty, and staff;

- A coordinated effort from campus units to implement leadership's vision through
 - regularly funded student programs and campus-wide diversity special events;
 - opportunities for on-going dialogue around issues of inclusion among all campus constituents, including students, faculty, staff, and administration;
 - a proactive investment in the expansion of a diverse faculty through recruitment and professional development around inclusive teaching practices that can appropriately and effectively educate our increasingly diverse student body;
 - curricular innovation focused on creating more diverse course and program offerings that encompass multiple student perspectives and identities; and
- An active commitment on the part of all faculty to diversify their course content as well as to broaden their individual teaching practices to be more inclusive of a variety of student learning styles.

Georgetown's success in continuing to implement these 'diversity best practices' will demonstrate our commitment to the University Ethos Statement, enrich the educational experience of all students, and benefit the personal and professional lives of all faculty and University staff.