

## **Diversity Action Council Faculty Focus Groups on Diversity & Inclusiveness, May 2005**

In May 2005, the Assessment Committee of the Diversity Action Council (DAC), in collaboration with the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, conducted a series of four focus groups with Main Campus faculty. This report describes the context of the assessment, summarizes the results, and suggests how they might be used to further Georgetown's efforts to create and sustain a welcoming and inclusive campus climate.

### **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

One of the roles of the DAC is to "examine critically the University's structures and activities that facilitate or inhibit our stated commitment to diversity" (Diversity Action Council Mission and Charge, 2004). As a part of that responsibility, the Assessment Committee began a comprehensive assessment of the campus climate for diversity and inclusiveness at Georgetown during fall semester 2004. To accomplish this, committee members reviewed and summarized reports on past diversity surveys and initiatives from 1996-2004, and gathered current data about student perceptions of the campus climate.

To gather current student perceptions, a brief survey was given to 1,019 incoming students attending the New Student Orientation (NSO) 'Pluralism in Action' program on August 31, 2004. Among other findings, that survey indicated that new Georgetown students were both hopeful of meeting and interacting with a wide variety of students different from themselves, as well as apprehensive that most of their peers would, in fact, soon separate into 'cliques' of students that were similar in terms of race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion (see report on 'Pluralism in Action New Student Survey on Diversity and Inclusiveness at Georgetown University,' May 2005, Office of the Provost).

A second student survey, developed and administered to all undergraduates in November 2004 by the University Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPIR), included specific items related to students' experiences of diversity on campus. When asked about faculty and student "attitudes and behavior toward issues of diversity and inclusion in the classroom," response patterns revealed that across all racial/ethnic groups and undergraduate class years, students "consistently indicated greater dissatisfaction with the attitudes and behavior of their fellow students than those of faculty" (OPIR, 2005). One possible interpretation of these results is that Georgetown students may be more receptive to faculty efforts to facilitate discussions of diversity issues in the classroom than they are to participating in informal out-of-class conversations with peers. Moreover, considering the findings of both the NSO and the OPIR surveys, providing students with opportunities to discuss diversity issues in the classroom could facilitate additional dialogue on campus and help alleviate the divisions that eventually arise between student groups on campus.

The research literature supports the positive effects of a diverse learning environment on student development and academic achievement. Patricia Gurin, in expert testimony leading up to the 2003 Supreme Court decision in favor of the University of Michigan law school admissions policy, presented an analysis of nine-year CIRP (Cooperative

Institutional Research Program) and HERI (the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute) data collected from over 9,000 students at nearly two hundred colleges and universities. Based on her analysis, Gurin (1999) argued for the positive impact of a diverse environment on learning outcomes, specifically that “students who had experienced the most diversity in classroom settings and in informal interactions with peers showed the greatest engagement in active thinking processes, growth in intellectual engagement and motivation, and growth in intellectual and academic skills.” Supporting this view, Smith and Schonfeld (2000), authors of a comprehensive review of the research literature on the impact of diversity on college students, note that in order for the educational benefits of diversity to be realized, “faculty engagement with issues of diversity – particularly educational and scholarly issues – is required” (p. 21).

In order for faculty to be engaged in discussions of diversity, however, both the overall campus, as well as the individual classroom climate, must be accepting and inclusive. In their book *The Politics of Survival in Academia*, Jacobs et al. (2002) present “firsthand accounts of the lives that many faculty of color experience in American academia” (p. xxiii). Even on a campus or in a department with cordial relations among colleagues, faculty of color may feel subtle pressures or marginalization. One faculty member in the Jacobs volume explains: “Unless you have come face-to-face with blatant individual prejudice, it is often difficult to recognize it when it presents itself in hidden, sometimes unintentional ways. . . . Whatever the reason, what I found was much more organizational discrimination and institutional racism than the individual variety” (p. xxviii). On a campus like Georgetown, where fewer than 16% of the full-time faculty on Main Campus are faculty of color (Asian, Black/African, Hispanic, or Native American)<sup>1</sup>, it is essential to solicit feedback from all faculty regarding not only how they handle diversity in their classrooms, but also about their personal experience of being included and valued – or not – within their departments and the University at large.

Accordingly, in order to build a more complete picture of the overall campus climate, the DAC Assessment Committee wanted current information on the diversity experiences and perspectives of Georgetown faculty. In early spring 2005, the Committee met with the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs to request support for running a series of focus groups with a small number of Main Campus faculty. The purpose of the proposed discussions would be to give a sample of faculty an opportunity to talk about their perceptions of the climate for diversity and inclusiveness at Georgetown, and to share in a safe environment their personal experiences with diversity issues. The Committee decided that focus groups would be more appropriate than a confidential, anonymous survey, because focus groups would allow faculty to bring up topics of mutual interest and concern and encourage continued dialogue beyond the focus groups. After discussing the Committee’s plans, it was agreed that the Assessment Committee would handle the logistics of sampling and focus group facilitation, and that the Associate Provost would send out the email invitation to faculty from the Office of the Provost.

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<sup>1</sup> Counts used for the focus group sampling were a non-standard but valid subset of official counts, pulled from the official Fall 2004 extract. Percentages stated in the report refer to this data set. What is non-standard but perfectly appropriate for the focus groups was combining the SNHS faculty with the Main Campus faculty and including non-resident alien (NRA) faculty in their self-reported race/ethnic categories (e.g., a white NRA from Norway would appear in the White column, a black NRA from Ethiopia would appear in the Black column).

## **FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Working closely with OPIR, the Committee then selected a stratified random sample of approximately 95 Main Campus faculty, drawn from the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Foreign Service, the McDonough School of Business, and the School of Nursing and Health Studies. The sample was drawn from all ordinary faculty ranks<sup>2</sup> (Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor), all departments within the included Schools, all identified ethnic/racial categories, and both genders. In order to ensure representation from gay and lesbian faculty, one Committee member asked a self-identified gay faculty member she knew for confidential recommendations of other gay or lesbian faculty who would be appropriate to invite, and added these names to the list. The Director of OPIR, on behalf of the DAC Assessment Committee, obtained IRB approval for the project.

Email invitations (see Appendix A) were sent out to the entire list through the Provost's Office, and a total of 35 faculty responded. Though six of these faculty declined the invitation to participate, a total of 29 agreed to attend a focus group. Of these, six ultimately were unable to attend their scheduled group due to last-minute conflicts including an ill child, unscheduled travel, jury duty, and emergency personal surgery.

In the aggregate, the groups were diverse in terms of gender, age, professed political views, sexual orientation, race & ethnicity, and academic discipline. Eleven of the participants were women; twelve were men. In the course of their remarks during the groups, at least three faculty members voluntarily self-identified as gay or lesbian. Time teaching at Georgetown ranged from one to over 20 years; the groups included assistant, associate, and full professors. Participating faculty were drawn from the following Schools:

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of Faculty</b>
College of Arts and Sciences	14
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences	2
McDonough School of Business	2
School of Nursing and Health Studies	2
Walsh School of Foreign Service	3

Table 1. Faculty Participation by School

In addition, faculty from Arab Studies, Economics, German, and Sociology had accepted the invitation to participate but were unable to attend (see discussion above).

## **QUESTION PROTOCOL**

In order to ensure general comparability of responses across the discussion groups, the Committee prepared a detailed question protocol (see Appendix B). All facilitators used this same list of questions as they conducted their groups; however, as often happens in such situations, each conversation developed its own particular dynamic, with the groups exploring common themes in varied ways. In responding to the question about

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<sup>2</sup> Visiting faculty (both long- and short-term) and adjuncts were not included in the sample due to their temporary affiliation and presumed lower level of involvement with campus life.

campus climate, for example, some groups discussed student behavior on campus and in their classes, while others focused more on faculty life within their home departments.

**FOCUS GROUP ADMINISTRATION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Four groups were convened during the first week of May 2005, with six faculty participants in each of three groups, and five in the fourth. Two members of the Assessment Committee, one facilitating the discussion and the other taking notes, led each group. All groups were held in a private conference room in the Car Barn, to provide a neutral meeting place away from most departmental offices. Each group lasted approximately 90 minutes. During the discussions, faculty shared their perceptions of the campus climate for diversity and inclusiveness; their perspectives on the diversity of the student body at Georgetown; reflections on their experiences teaching in diverse classrooms; and their opinions on the value of including a diversity question on end-of-semester course evaluations.

Shortly after the groups were held, each note-taker prepared a word-processed version of her or his notes, which was then shared with the Assessment Committee. Members began with a thematic analysis of the combined responses, in order to illuminate patterns of faculty responses across the groups. Table 2. displays the results of this preliminary analysis, grouping major themes according to *faculty concerns*, *student issues*, and *general campus climate*.

<p><b>Faculty concerns:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Discomfort as a faculty member of color</li> <li>* Too few minority faculty at Georgetown</li> <li>* Administration not committed to diversity</li> <li>* Lack of recognition for faculty efforts in diversity/service</li> <li>* Faculty hiring practices contradict University's ideals</li> <li>* Tokenism condoned in some departments</li> <li>* Lack of exit interviews when faculty members leave</li> </ul>
<p><b>Student issues (from faculty perspective):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Student body lacks socioeconomic diversity</li> <li>* Culture of politeness/silence around diversity</li> <li>* Classrooms not perceived as 'safe spaces'</li> <li>* Lack of intellectual community</li> <li>* Careerism</li> <li>* Campus drinking culture</li> <li>* Level of ignorance about diversity</li> </ul>
<p><b>General campus climate:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Conservative students versus liberal faculty</li> <li>* Gays &amp; lesbians not welcomed on campus</li> <li>* Gender imbalance in some departments, and administration</li> <li>* Administration withdrawn from full engagement in campus life &amp; issues</li> <li>* Sense of secrecy on part of administration about diversity incidents</li> <li>* Conflicted sense of campus community:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "Things are measurably better than a few years ago"</li> <li>* "No obvious changes on campus"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 2. Major themes from faculty focus groups

These themes are explored in more detail below, based on faculty comments during the focus groups (see 'Discussion and interpretation of faculty responses').

## FACULTY IMPRESSIONS OF DIVERSITY AT GEORGETOWN

As a warm-up activity before the discussions began, each focus group participant was asked to respond to an anonymous written prompt similar to that used with students during the 2004 New Student Orientation (see page 1), asking them to “List three words that come to mind when you think of Georgetown University in relation to diversity and inclusion.” It was in fact the results from the August 2004 first-year student survey that motivated the Committee to collect similar impressions from faculty at the focus groups.

About half the faculty also included additional written comments expanding their views. Major themes represented by faculty responses from the ‘three words’ exercise are shown in Table 3 below. For purposes of analysis, themes were interpretively arranged as *inputs* (characteristics imputed to Georgetown by the faculty), *actions* (how faculty saw these traits actualized in campus life), and *perceived results* (how, in their view, these qualities and actions affect the campus climate for diversity and inclusion). Parenthetical values indicate how many faculty responses correspond to each theme. (Theme 7: ‘Diversity is important’, was a general/composite theme implied throughout the comments.)

Inputs	Actions	Perceived result/ climate
Theme 1: “Principled” (10)	Theme 5: Well-intentioned effort (10)	Theme 7: Diversity is important
Theme 2: Conservative (2)	Theme 6: Progress is hindered (6)	Theme 8: Commitment is tentative (7)
Theme 3: Catholic tension (5)		
Theme 4: Little economic/ other diversity (4)		Theme 9: Talk but no action (7)

Table 3. Summary of themes from ‘3 descriptive words’ surveys

Although committee members then compared the faculty ‘three words’ responses with those of the August 2004 PIA students, the results were inconclusive. While there was some overlap – a few words used by both groups to describe Georgetown, e.g. *international*, *tolerant*, *welcoming*, and *white* – the two groups differed greatly in terms of numbers of respondents (over 1,000 students, compared to only 23 faculty) and length of time spent on campus (students had been here less than a week; faculty residence ranged from one to twenty years). Many more faculty responses, along with data collected from these same students at the end of their four years at Georgetown, would therefore be needed in order to make any useful generalizations about correspondences between the faculty and student perceptions revealed in these data.

## DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FACULTY RESPONSES TO FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Three general discussion prompts were used as core questions to anchor the conversation in each focus group. This section presents summaries of the aggregated responses of faculty across all groups to each of the three key questions.

### ***Faculty view Georgetown as exclusive, not inclusive***

The first question asked faculty was, “*How would you describe the Georgetown University campus community, in terms of diversity and inclusion?*” Responses included general impressions of the campus climate (“political correctness run amok”; “a level of ignorance exists”), as well as more specific comments regarding students (“cultural diversity at GU is wide, but socioeconomic status is largely elite”; “the number of Black and Hispanic students is less than the national average”) and faculty at Georgetown (“faculty tends to be the most liberal group on campus”; “too few minority faculty members”). Some faculty also responded to this question by expanding on the ‘three words’ they had used with the written prompt distributed before the discussion

began (see preceding section on ‘Faculty impressions of diversity at Georgetown’). A fairly representative comment that seems to summarize the faculty perspective was one faculty member’s comment that “External communities do not equate Georgetown with inclusiveness, but see Georgetown as exclusive.”

***Some see change, but more positive, proactive steps could be taken***

As a follow-up prompt for the previous question, faculty participants were asked: “*If you’ve been at Georgetown more than a year or two, do you think the campus climate is changing, and if so, how?*” Responses to this question were varied, and ranged from “no discernible changes in eight years” to “things are measurably better than a few years ago, but Georgetown is still behind peer institutions”. Some of the major points raised by faculty included the following:

- Financial issues contribute to lack of minority educators at Georgetown, but resistance still exists and inhibits efforts to diversify.
- There’s a disconnect between feeling welcomed and ‘at home’ here.
- People of color are simply not represented in our department; some departments feel one minority faculty member is enough to show they are ‘diverse’ – window dressing.
- Faculty efforts to encourage diversity are largely ignored.
- The role of alcohol in lowering inhibitions for many [bias-related] incidents merely demonstrates already existing feelings.
- Some populations on campus are silenced – gays, Blacks.
- Sense of secrecy (administration), withdrawal from full engagement

The ‘episodic nature’ of diversity efforts at Georgetown – a phrase used by President DeGioia in his address to the University community earlier this spring – is summarized by this faculty member’s comment: “They do very good damage control...but diversity here just doesn’t seem like a priority. Once a problem is solved, all is well again, but things are seething beneath the surface; there’s a lack of dialogue or exchange.”

***Diversity topics tend to be avoided in the classroom***

We then asked the faculty participants to share their perceptions of the students they teach, by responding to this prompt: “*As a classroom instructor, how would you describe the classroom atmosphere, or your students’ willingness to engage with you and with each other intellectually in class?*” In general, the faculty responses to this prompt illuminated what one participant called a ‘culture of politeness’ on campus, “meaning students are reluctant to challenge the thoughts of their professor.” Other faculty comments in response to this question that support this view included:

- not enough open discussion of these [diversity] issues on campus
- students (especially female and international students) hesitant to say anything controversial
- tends to be less participation among first-year students in class
- quality of student engagement in classroom is limited and impacts understanding various experiences and worldviews

While agreeing that students do not engage in classroom discussion of diversity issues, faculty also acknowledged their role in facilitating – or hindering – such discussions:

- How do we prepare students to interface with a world that is diverse?
- Do faculty really engage students in difficult dialogue?

- If discussion becomes challenging, I'll step in and ask students to 'turn down the heat.'
- First year, first semester is a chance for faculty to make a difference.
- I try to teach classes that attract diverse students, but don't have much luck.
- Students, especially upperclassmen, self-select into courses with professors they already know or agree with.

Based on these comments, there seems to be hesitation among some faculty as to whether or how to engage students actively in 'difficult dialogue' on issues of diversity and social justice. Considering only the data gathered from the focus groups, however, it is unclear why faculty might avoid discussing diversity and social justice issues in class; possibilities include their perception that students are too conservative, a lack of support from the administration to raise these issues, and a department climate that discourages faculty engagement with diversity issues in the classroom. Further study, including issues of personal comfort zones as well as perceived liability, is needed to uncover the reasons behind the apparent faculty reticence to bring diversity topics into the classroom. Nonetheless, because it appears that students may look to faculty to initiate and monitor such discussions in an academic setting (see discussion of November 2004 OPIR survey results on page 1, above), expanded opportunities for professional development for all faculty around inclusive teaching strategies should be considered as an appropriate and useful intervention. In addition, faculty seminars focused on more specifically social justice-oriented pedagogies could be offered for those faculty whose disciplines intersect with social justice issues and who wish to develop more skill in teaching these issues.

#### **DIVERSITY QUESTION ON STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS**

Near the end of each focus group session, faculty were asked for feedback on the wording and usefulness of including a proposed 'diversity question' on University end-of-semester course evaluations. This item was suggested in late spring 2004 by the Faculty Senate and used on their course evaluations by six of 30 faculty members who participated in a voluntary pilot administration of online course evaluations in fall semester 2004. Focus group participants were given a copy of the question wording, as follows: "The instructor promoted a learning environment that was respectful of students regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender, nationality, race, class, religion, or sexual orientation." The proposed response scale was agree/disagree, with one end of the scale labeled 'Strongly Agree' and the other end 'Strongly Disagree,' enclosing three intermediary points with no labels.

Participants were asked if they would favor including such a question on the course evaluations for their classes. The 'diversity item' drew a mixed reaction from faculty, ranging from 'yes' (2), to "yes, if it ended with '... a learning environment respectful of all students'" (2), to "I think faculty would have a problem with this." Other comments included:

- I don't know anyone who wouldn't do well on this rating.
- Availability of faculty on this campus demonstrates their respectfulness of students.
- Question highlights differences, but is not inclusive
- Question should include the problem of income
- A number of my colleagues would find this intrusive; would push a lot of buttons.

- How will it [students' responses to this question] be used?
- Devoid of context. I don't like it.

A few faculty were concerned that it would simply provide “a place for students to complain about faculty,” and therefore did not favor using it. Others expressed general dissatisfaction over the use of student course evaluations at all, saying that “students should not be grading teachers” and that evaluations “empower students to use [them] as a tool [against faculty]”. The consensus across groups was that not only was the wording of the question problematic, but that the use of such a question would not have clear faculty support.

In bringing each focus group to closure, the facilitator asked: “*Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experiences regarding diversity or inclusion at Georgetown?*” In response to this prompt, faculty volunteered a number of concerns, including the following:

- The importance of diversity issues in the classroom must be stressed from the top of the individual departments, and all the way down the line.
- Faculty members are key to making change, but they need constant administrative support.
- At Georgetown, salient diversity concerns are not always (only) about race, but include sexism, homophobia, and class issues.

#### **SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVING CAMPUS CLIMATE**

Based on faculty comments already highlighted in this report, the faculty’s expressed sense of the ‘state of diversity’ at Georgetown could be summarized in the statement below. While this statement may seem somewhat harsh or self-critical, it also includes points toward the more positive end of the continuum, which describes the direction in which we as a university community desire to move:

In principle and in words, Georgetown is committed to diversity; however, our emphasis is on awareness and recognition above inclusion, on tolerance instead of acceptance. Rather than developing and implementing a long-term strategy to diversify the campus community, we are more often reactive and focus on short-term fixes for crisis situations. Because of this tension between principle and practice, our efforts in pursuit of increased faculty and student diversity are tentative, and our progress is provisional and episodic.

Our strengths on this campus are our commitment to principles of social justice and our awareness of areas needing attention; we have the knowledge, which we can now more clearly translate into volition and action by means of a strategic diversity planning process focused on reaching long-term goals.

Based on our analysis of the results of these focus groups, the DAC Assessment Committee recommends the following next steps and areas for further study<sup>3</sup>:

- To facilitate ongoing conversations about campus climate and intergroup relations, the Provost’s Office should arrange for additional opportunities for

<sup>3</sup> Recommendations specifically related to faculty initiatives are the focus of this report. Please refer to the Diversity Action Council’s forthcoming *Campus Plan for Assessing Diversity* for additional components of this assessment and advocacy effort.

faculty to participate in facilitated discussions of diversity issues and concerns, especially regarding faculty life within departments. The fall 2005 discussions of Bowen, et al.'s book, *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education*, initiated and conducted by the Provost, are an excellent example of this type of engagement with faculty and staff around diversity issues. We recommend that such conversations be regular, on-going, and cross-departmental, to ensure privacy and encourage participation. Questions that need to be addressed in planning such groups include: *What are the specific goals of the conversations? Who should be involved as participants and facilitators? How would they be invited? By whom? How will any resulting faculty concerns be addressed?*

- In keeping with recommendations made by the 2002 Middle States Task Forces on Faculty, on Students, and on Educational Programs and Curricula at Georgetown, additional efforts should be made in the following areas:
  - **Faculty recruitment:** *Georgetown must continue efforts to recruit a diverse faculty, especially in departments where women and minorities are under-represented.* [Middle States Task Force on Faculty]
  - **Professional development around inclusive teaching:** *Faculty development efforts should be continued or instituted around... understanding and identifying different learning styles and traditions and interacting in the classroom with our increasingly diverse student population.* [Middle States Task Force on Faculty]
    - CNDLS offers a yearly week-long Seminar on Inclusive Teaching and Learning (IT&L), focused on diversity issues and teaching diverse students, for faculty and graduate teaching assistants. However, departments and/or the Provost's Office should provide additional professional development support (funding, staff, release time, financial incentives) for faculty to attend pedagogically-based seminars such as IT&L, to prepare them to facilitate dialogue in their classrooms.
    - Interested faculty might also be encouraged to volunteer and receive incentives to facilitate discussions with informal groups of students outside of class, such as at invited follow-up discussions to the 2005 NSO's Pluralism in Action program or the DAC-sponsored 'One Book' campus reading program.
  - **Student life:** *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.* [Middle States Task Force on Students]
    - Discussions about campus climate between faculty and student life administrators, campus ministry, the director of CMEA, and a diverse group of students should also begin. Such discussions could be facilitated by the DAC through the Provost's Office and could help the University fulfill its mission of becoming – as challenged by CMEA – “an exemplary community of intellectual, faithful and caring learners,” realizing “that it can achieve this only by embracing the pluralism embodied by all its students and by working to build a more just society” (<http://www3.georgetown.edu/centers/cmsa/about.html>).

- Education and scholarship on diversity: *The University should expand its support for faculty and programs with a significant focus on justice, and encourage more faculty to engage in the area, including emphasis on cultural diversity and multiculturalism.* [Middle States Task Force on Educational Programs and Curricula]
  - To promote education and scholarship surrounding diversity, the University administration should provide more visible and/or concrete support for faculty development to increase diversity awareness among faculty, staff, and students, both in the classroom and through service on campus groups such as the Diversity Action Council. This recommendation focuses on educating all members on campus to live in a pluralistic society.
  - This effort could also include systematically evaluating the curriculum across campus to assess the distribution of diversity topics throughout departments and Schools at Georgetown University and to reconsider instituting a University diversity course requirement.
- The Provost's Office should investigate the policies governing exit interviews for all faculty leaving the University's employ. If possible, determine an appropriate interviewing office or body on campus, and institute a procedure to gather data on why faculty leave, including the relationship, if any, to the campus climate for faculty of color and other underrepresented groups.
- To assess progress towards the recruitment of a diverse faculty and student body, a Campus Diversity Progress Report could be developed to benchmark current conditions and evaluate future progress. Enrollment and graduation rates for minority students, as well as hiring, gender equity, performance, and satisfaction data for historically underrepresented groups of faculty should be examined. Faculty suggestions should be solicited regarding other appropriate categories to include, such as minority student preparation and support, campus bias incident report statistics, and departmental climate.
  - Faculty comments from the recent focus groups could be used as one source of input in formulating benchmarks and goals on the report card.
  - The Provost's Office could pilot the report card by sending it electronically to a sample of faculty, such as the focus group participants themselves.
- Further follow-up is recommended regarding faculty response to the suggestion of including the May 2004 Faculty Senate's proposed 'diversity question' on University end-of-semester course evaluations. It should be noted that the Georgetown Law School has already included such an item on its course evaluation forms. A Dean or faculty members from the Law School might be asked to come and discuss their experience with student responses to that question with Main Campus faculty.

These suggestions, judging from the faculty focus group feedback, would further Georgetown's efforts to create and sustain a welcoming and inclusive campus climate.

## Resources:

Campus Ministry

<<http://campusministry.georgetown.edu/>>

DAC contact: Pamela Galligan-Stierle

Center for Minority Educational Affairs

<<http://www3.georgetown.edu/centers/cmsa/index.html>>

DAC contact: Dennis Williams

Leaders in Educating About Diversity (LEAD) student group

<<http://www3.georgetown.edu/centers/cmsa/services.html>>

DAC contact: Stephanie Colunga

Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship

<<http://cndls.georgetown.edu>>

DAC contacts: Barbara Craig and Lisa Kaufman

Diversity Action Council

<<http://provost.georgetown.edu/dac>>

## References:

Garcia, Mildred, et al. 2001. *Assessing Campus Diversity Initiatives: A Guide for Campus Practitioners*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Gurin, Patricia. 1999. Expert Report of Patricia Gurin, in *Gratz, et al. v. Bollinger, et al.*, No. 97-75321 (E.D. Mich.) and *Gutter, et al. v. Bollinger, et al.*, No. 97-75928 (E.D. Mich.) <http://www.umich.edu/~urel/admissions/legal/expert/studies.html>.

Jacobs, L., et al. 2002. *The Politics of Survival in Academia*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Office of Institutional Research & Planning (OPIR). February 3, 2005. GIRDERS, Volume 4, Issue 2.

Smith, Daryl G., and Schonfeld, Natalie B. 2000. The benefits of diversity: What the research tells us. *About Campus*, November-December 2000, pp. 16-23.

## Appendix A. Invitation email to prospective faculty participants

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

The Diversity Action Council (DAC) was established in 2004 and charged by the Provost to create and advocate for diversity-related programming, to serve as a clearinghouse for diversity-related information, and to reach out to members of the University community who do not generally gravitate toward discussions of diversity. The DAC Assessment Committee spent the past fall semester collecting and examining survey data from students to measure perceptions of and satisfaction with the sense of community at Georgetown, including different aspects of diversity and inclusion.

This spring the Committee would like to develop a better sense of the attitudes of Main Campus and NHS faculty with respect to the same set of community and inclusion issues. It has decided that focus groups would be the most effective way to do this in the short term. Since there are many more Georgetown faculty than could be included in the focus groups, the Committee has randomly chosen 60 individuals to invite to participate.

You have been selected as a potential participant in one of the focus groups. We hope that you will accept this invitation by responding to this email and indicating your schedule preference below. Participation in the focus groups is voluntary, but we hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity to share your insights on these important issues with us and with your faculty colleagues.

The focus groups will be facilitated by members of the DAC Assessment Committee, assisted by staff from the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), who regularly conduct focus groups for academic departments and other offices on campus. Applicable IRB regulations will be followed, so we can assure you that your comments will be held in the strictest confidentiality. Reports on the focus groups will mainly concentrate on general summaries of aggregated responses; while occasionally a specific faculty comment may be used, no response will be identified with any individual faculty member, either by name, gender, ethnic background, department, rank, or any other potentially identifying information.

Thank you for all that you contribute to the educational excellence of Georgetown; we look forward to hearing your positive response to this invitation.

Sincerely,

The Office of the Provost

## FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

We have scheduled the following days and times for these focus groups, and invite you to RSVP to this email by selecting the timeslot that best fits your schedule. Please respond by Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and **indicate at least two preferences**, as some shifting of groups may be necessary once we've heard from all participants. Lunch or other refreshments will be provided at each session.

Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>:

- 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
- 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.
- 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
- 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>:

- 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
- 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.
- 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
- 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>:

- 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
- 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.
- 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
- 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>:

- 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
- 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.
- 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
- 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>:

- 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
- 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.
- 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
- 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Once we have finalized the schedule, we will confirm your time and inform you of the room location as well as the name and contact information of your focus group facilitator. If you have further questions prior to the focus group meeting, please let us know. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

## Appendix B. Faculty focus group question protocol

### DAC Faculty Focus Group Protocol, May 2005

#### Introductory Remarks (5 minutes)

- Welcome and thank participants for coming
- Review purpose of discussion: talk about perceptions of the Georgetown campus community and climate for diversity and inclusion
- Introduce self and note-taker
- Verify that all have responded to 'word association' diversity question; ***be sure to collect these***
- Give assurances of confidentiality and anonymity of faculty responses
- Encourage free-flowing conversation among participants (expand, disagree, etc.)
- Convey DAC's sincere desire to hear perspective of each individual present

#### Opening Question (5 minutes)

- ▶ As some of us may not know each other, please give your name and department, and perhaps tell us what prompted you to choose to come to this focus group.

#### Introductory Question (10 minutes):

- ▶ How would you describe the Georgetown University campus community, in terms of diversity and inclusion?

[prompt] – How do you define 'diversity'?

- racial/ethnic
- class/socioeconomic
- gender/sexual orientation
- intellectual

[prompt] – If you've been at Georgetown more than a year or two, do you think the campus climate is changing, and if so, how?

#### Transition Question (10 minutes):

Now we'd like to hear your perceptions about the students you teach.

- ▶ How diverse are the students in your own classes?

[prompt] – Do you think the courses you teach attract diverse students?

[prompt] – How do you support the different levels of intellectual development of the students in your classes?

#### Core Questions (20 minutes)

Let's turn now to your reflections on your experience of diversity and inclusion in the classroom.

- ▶ How do you perceive the relevance of student diversity/inclusiveness to teaching in your discipline?

- ▶ As a classroom instructor, how satisfied are you with the quality of interaction among students in your classes and between students and yourself (vis-à-vis diversity and inclusion) ?

[prompt] – How would you describe the classroom atmosphere, or your students' willingness

- to engage with each other intellectually in class?
- to engage with you intellectually in class?

[prompt] – What do you do when students are not engaged, or disengage?

[prompt] – If class participation is part of your grading criteria, how do  
Students know if their participation is adequate / acceptable?

- ▶ It's been our experience that the faculty themselves are some of the best resources for developing promising practices around inclusive teaching and learning. Would anyone like to describe something you've done in class that facilitated communication, understanding, or respect?

[prompt] – Think about a critical incident during a class session when the discussion became challenging or heated. What did you do?

[prompt] – When you prepare your syllabus, how do you make it more welcoming of a variety of perspectives on the topic?

[prompt] – When you prepare for a class session, what teaching approaches connect with the diverse learning styles of your students?

### **Follow-up Questions (10-15 minutes)**

In our final question, we're asking you to act as consultants regarding a proposed 'diversity item' on the end of course evaluations students fill out each semester.

- ▶ An optional 'diversity item' was suggested last spring by the Faculty Senate and used by some faculty during a pilot administration of online course evaluations last fall. We'd like your opinion on the language of that item. That question

***[pass out printed copy of question to participants here]***

was phrased: "The instructor promoted a learning environment that was respectful of students regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender, nationality, race, class, religion, or sexual orientation," with an agree/disagree scale, one end of the scale labeled Strongly Agree and other end Strongly Disagree, with no labels for three points in between.

***[Allow some time for participants to read and consider wording]***

[prompt] – Would you favor including such a question on the course evaluations for your classes?

[prompt] – If the question were modified, would you be in favor of using it?

[prompt] – How might we improve the wording of this question?

- ▶ Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experiences regarding diversity or inclusion at Georgetown?

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Thank you very much for taking the time to participate today. We'll be combining your responses with those of faculty participating in the other two focus groups and will be presenting this collective feedback to the Diversity Action Council to help complete their assessment of the campus climate for diversity and inclusion.

If you have any questions about your participation in these focus groups, or any additional comments or concerns you would like to convey, please contact your focus group facilitator ***[provide your contact information]***, or Barbara Craig, Director of Assessment & Diversity at CNDLS, 687-5104 or [bac@georgetown.edu](mailto:bac@georgetown.edu).