

**REPORT OF THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
DEAN'S DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Recommendations	3
I. Structural	3
II. Undergraduate	4
III. Graduate	4
IV. Faculty	5
V. Staff	6
Discussion	6

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Introduction

Imperative #6 of Texas A&M University's Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence ("Diversify and Globalize the A&M Community") states that Texas A&M "must be a leader in promoting diversity in its student body, faculty, staff, and intellectual viewpoints" (p. 43). The College of Liberal Arts (CLA) was committed to diversifying its faculty, students, staff, and curriculum long before the advent of Vision 2020. However, diversity efforts in the CLA have been conducted primarily at the department level, with minimal coordination from the dean's office. More important, the College currently does not have a long-term diversity plan. Departmental efforts have been successful, and three departments (English, Speech Communication, and Sociology) have earned Provost's Diversity Awards. Nonetheless, despite the dedicated efforts of many CLA faculty and administrators, the College, like the University, must take more forceful actions to achieve Imperative #6 (see "Discussion" section below). In October of 2000 Dean Woodrow Jones, Jr., with the endorsement of the CLA Executive Council and the Liberal Arts Council, appointed an ad hoc Dean's Diversity Advisory Committee (DDAC), charged with formulating a long-range diversity plan for the College (Appendix A). The committee held its initial meeting on November 15, 2000, and met throughout the Spring 2001 semester. The importance of the committee's work was heightened by Provost Ronald G. Douglas's announcement in February 2001 that "diversity" and "internationalization" would be two of the three "cross-cutting issues" that all campus units must address in developing their plans for the University's Strategic Plan 2001.

At its first meeting, the DDAC agreed to adopt a broad definition of "diversity" that would include not only African Americans, Hispanics, and women (the categories tracked by the University) but also other underrepresented racial and ethnic groups; international students; gays and lesbians; members of religious minorities; and the disabled. DDAC members volunteered to serve on subcommittees that would gather information and make recommendations on diversity issues affecting faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. Subcommittee chairs were: Dr. Antonio Cepeda-Benito (faculty), Kay Goldman (graduate), and Mike Balog (undergraduate).

Documents and data reviewed by the full committee or subcommittees included the following (Items marked with an asterisk are included in Appendix B):

*"Does Diversity Make a Difference? A Research Report" (Academe 86 [Sept.-Oct. 2000]: 54-57).

*Demographic Summary, Fall 2000, OISP

Percent of Tenured-Tenure Track Faculty Who Are Minority, CLA

*Demographic distribution of faculty hires for the past five years in relation to the National Research Council (NRC) report of doctorates awarded for those same years (in memorandum of 13 March 2001 from Executive Vice President and Provost Ronald G. Douglas)

*AACU Diversity Web (<http://www.diversityweb.org>)

*Executive Summary of the “Perspectives on the Climate for Diversity” or “Campus Climate Study” (1998)

The DDAC also heard a presentation on diversity-recruitment initiatives in the Office of Admissions, by Joe Estrada, Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management, and Dr. Frank Ashley, Director of Admissions. Felicia Scott, Director of the Office of Multicultural Services, and Beatriz Arnillas, Assistant Director for Diversity Education, also visited with the committee to share information about diversity programs and resources available through the Office of Multicultural Services. The Undergraduate Subcommittee interviewed several undergraduate students about their experiences as “minority” students at Texas A&M.

In addition, individual members of the DDAC gained information and ideas by attending the following diversity-focused events on this campus:

Texas Higher Education Diversity Conference (November 16 and 17, 2000)

Presentation by Dr. Mitchell Rice, Director of the Race and Ethnic Studies Institute (RESI), on RESI report “Factors Influencing Minority Students’ Decision Not to Enroll at Texas A&M” (November 27, 2000)

“Racism at Texas A&M?” Public forum sponsored by Multicultural Leadership Forum (February 2001).

Workshop by Dr. Denice Denton, Dean of Engineering at the University of Washington, on recruiting for diversity (February 2001).

Workshop conducted by Dr. James Anderson, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs at North Carolina State University, on “Increasing the Effectiveness of University Instruction by Accommodating the Diverse Needs of Learners While Fostering Rigor and Excellence” (February 20, 2001)

National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) Training of Trainers/Professional Development Seminar (March 28-30).

In March 2001 the DDAC subcommittees submitted their reports and recommendations. This final report was approved by the DDAC on May 15 2001.

Recommendations

I. Structural

1. The Diversity Advisory Committee should be a standing advisory committee to the dean, with rotating members. The Committee's charge would include:

- ▼ Meeting at least once each semester with the Dean of Liberal Arts to review progress in implementing the recommendations made in this report, make further recommendations for enhancing diversity across the College, and ensure that diversity is a continuing high priority.
- ▼ Promote and encourage attendance at diversity events; act as a clearinghouse for information (research, publications, events, etc.) on diversity.

2. Diversity should be added to the major areas of responsibility assigned to an associate dean, thus placing it on equal footing with the current title areas (Research, Faculty, Graduate, Undergraduate, Development). The Associate Dean for Diversity would chair the Diversity Advisory Committee and have primary responsibility for implementing the recommendations put forth in this report and in future ones. The Associate Dean would ensure that the cross-cutting diversity initiatives in the CLA Strategic Plan are implemented. Other duties would include:

- ▼ Serve as the main contact person in the dean's office for all reports of discrimination within the CLA (racial, gender, religious, sexual orientation, disability).
- ▼ Collaborate with the Admissions Office and CLA Office of Undergraduate Student Services on student recruitment and retention efforts
- ▼ Assist academic departments with efforts to recruit and retain a diverse CLA faculty

3. The CLA should promote interdisciplinary academic programs and courses that enhance diversity in the curriculum. For example, in addition to the minor and proposed MA and PhD programs in Hispanic Studies, create minors in African American Studies and Border Studies, and new courses in Judaic and Islamic Studies.

4. The CLA web page should have a diversity site, which would include the Dean's strong statement of support for diversity, and have hot-links to University and community web sites that would be of interest to prospective faculty, staff, and students.

5. According to the recent report of the Arts and Sciences Task Force, which was appointed by the Provost to make recommendations for advancing the arts and sciences at TAMU, the CLA lags behind its peer institutions in terms of number of faculty, faculty salaries, graduate stipends, and teaching loads. Thus the report recommends that significant resources be allocated to the CLA (as well as to the Colleges of Science and Geosciences) to recruit and retain quality faculty and graduate students, and to improve the College's basic infrastructure. The DDAC supports the recommendations in the Task Force report. Though the recommendations do not speak directly to diversity issues, they would if implemented benefit the entire CLA community and enhance the College's ability to attract and retain women and minority faculty, staff, and students.

II. Undergraduate

1. The Dean's office and department heads should involve undergraduate students (especially minorities) in recruitment of students from "targeted" high schools and also two-year colleges with substantial minority populations. CLA students should participate in the new University-level student-recruitment committee.
2. Establish and promote a peer-mentoring program for freshmen and transfer students from underrepresented groups.
3. Ensure that CLA orientation programs for new students stress the importance of diversity and are welcoming to all students.
4. Continue to bring diverse speakers and entertainment groups to campus.

III. Graduate

1. Involve graduate students in recruitment/retention efforts, including mentoring.
2. Strengthen or build connections between the CLA and System schools, especially those in South Texas. This can be accomplished in part by expanding the Preparing Future Faculty Program (PPF), which currently exists only in the Sociology department. This program provides opportunities for Sociology graduate students to teach in institutions whose primary mission is undergraduate education and whose student body is much more diverse than that of TAMU- College Station. In addition to gaining valuable teaching and professional experience, the PPF graduate students can encourage qualified undergraduates to apply for graduate study at TAMU- College Station, thus increasing the pool of applicants from underrepresented groups.

3. The CLA should provide **diversity training** for all GATs/GALs teaching in the CLA. This training will have two purposes: (1) To ensure that GATs/GALs are aware of diversity issues, thus enabling them to deal with their own students in a way that is sensitive to these issues; and (2) To provide GATs/GALs with advice about what to do when students in their classes behave in a discriminatory manner. This training should include clear information regarding whom the GAT/GAL can contact for advice in dealing with discriminatory incidents occurring in his or her classroom.
4. Create and sustain opportunities for minority graduate students to interact socially and professionally with their peers in other CLA departments and outside the CLA.

IV. Faculty

1. Improvement in this area will require strong leadership from the Dean. The Dean must ensure that department heads are committed to increasing faculty diversity and the quality of the department's faculty. Performance evaluations of department heads should explicitly ask for evidence of efforts to recruit a diverse faculty.
2. The CLA should encourage and fund faculty visits/exchanges with System schools.
3. The CLA should fund faculty and grad student recruitment trips to conferences of minority organizations (e.g., National Black Graduate Student Assoc.). Investigate possibility of TAMU hosting such a conference.
4. The Dean's office should prepare a "diversity packet" for departmental search committees and prospective candidates.
5. Departmental search committees should include individuals with different perspectives, expertise, and demonstrated commitment to diversity. Ideally, the committee itself should be diverse. Thus female faculty and faculty of color should be encouraged to participate in recruitment committees. If necessary, they should be given relief from other responsibilities so as not to overburden them.
6. Each spring semester the Dean and associate dean should meet with chairs of faculty search committees and emphasize inclusion and active recruitment of candidates from different backgrounds. The Dean should instruct the committees to follow the guidelines and strategies included in the TAMU "Guide to Recruitment and Retention for Faculty and Staff Diversity" and/or other diversity-recruitment documents.
7. Search committees must aggressively attempt to recruit a diverse pool of qualified candidates, and should be required to document specific efforts to attract minority and women candidates.

V. Staff

1. Staff representation on the Dean's Diversity Advisory Committee would strongly signal that the dean recognizes and solicits the efforts of individuals in staff positions as important to achieving this goal of the college.
2. Diversity awareness and training for staff should be coordinated by the Dean's Office and supported by the departments so that, in the course of one year, all staff of the college have completed this training. A half-day program is offered by the Department of Multicultural Services that can be tailored to the College of Liberal Arts.
3. Continue to fund and promote the annual college Diversity Award (part of the College of Liberal Arts Superior Service Awards program) to recognize those who help realize the college's vision of diversity and inclusion.

Discussion

Based on the hard data and anecdotal evidence reviewed by the DDAC, it is clear that, despite the sincere efforts of many faculty, students, staff, and administrators, the University and the College of Liberal Arts have a long way to go to reach the objective stated in Imperative #6 of Vision 2020. The CLA has made commendable progress in hiring women faculty; indeed, more than 60% of the faculty hires in the past five years have been female (Douglas memo, Appendix B). However, as the attached tables indicate (Appendix C), the percentages of Black and Hispanic students and faculty are unacceptably low. (To simplify the graphs for this report, Asian, Native American, and International are combined in the "Other" category. Data for each of these ethnic groups is available on the Office of Institutional Studies and Planning website.) Moreover, though many CLA faculty and students assume that the College is more diverse than the University overall, the data tell a different story. Only in the category of Hispanic faculty does the College percentage significantly exceed that of the University (6.5% / 4.2%). The percentage of Black PhDs in CLA (1.3%) is particularly disturbing. Clearly, the College must intensify its recruitment of minority PhD students.

The data collected by Dean of Faculties Janis Stout on demographic distribution of faculty hires for the past five years in relation to the pool of minority PhDs suggests that other colleges—especially Business—have been more successful at recruiting African Americans and Hispanics than has the CLA (see Provost Douglas's memorandum dated 13 March 2001).

The 1998 "Campus Climate Survey" revealed that Aggie culture was not welcoming to ethnic minorities, especially to African Americans: 48% of the African American students surveyed reported encountering racial discrimination. Anecdotal evidence gathered by the DDAC suggests that the racial climate has not changed substantially since 1998. For example, when asked about their perceptions of

the academic and social sides of the campus, students interviewed by Committee members praised the University's academics and resources, but criticized its social atmosphere with regards to minority student life. The students felt that traditional campus life was "not for them." They were quite vocal about feeling unwelcome at or alienated from campus traditions, those elements that are fundamental in building and maintaining a campus culture. They suggested that the programs and activities sponsored by the Multicultural Services Office and the various organizations run by and for students of color were their only real opportunity to socialize with their peers and feel at ease.

These students also felt that the University administration did very little to encourage and sustain the diversity it claims to desire in its official media. They asserted that overt incidents of discrimination largely went unnoticed by an apathetic or insensitive campus community. Recently, a minority student was spat upon and subjected to ethnic slurs by other students while in class. A Hispanic transfer student, who is a graduating senior, spoke of hearing racially offensive remarks being made about Mexican Americans in her presence while at T-Camp, adding that camp staff did not address the incident when told about it.

Students at the "Racism at Texas A&M Forum" reported that minority students residing in dormitories were sometimes reassigned to new rooms to accommodate the prejudices of students and their families, and they related experiences about University faculty and staff (particularly student workers) who seemed insensitive to diversity concerns. An African American member of the Corps of Cadets at the forum recalled an incident where a poster in her dorm was defaced with racial slurs. Upon reporting the incident to her RA, she was asked if she was "sure that it wasn't just a joke." Nearly all the students interviewed could recall the occurrence of such intentional or unintentional racism, from the publication of inflammatory editorials in the Battalion, to alleged unfair treatment by campus authorities. Just as ethnic and racial minorities experience feelings of alienation and isolation, members of religious minorities (including Mormons, Catholics, and members of other Christian sects that are "minorities" on this campus) often encounter religious intolerance and ignorance that create similar feelings of isolation and rejection. For example, non-Christian and "minority" Christian members of the community have repeatedly complained that they feel excluded when Christian prayers are recited at campus events (e.g. Muster), and non-Christians feel excluded when speakers assume that the entire audience or student population is Christian.

Given that the University has such a visible presence in the community, it is no surprise when students report that this same poor treatment extends into the College Station community. Gay and lesbian students as well as ethnic minority students report not being served in some restaurants and local businesses. One student recalled seeing a confederate flag placed in the window of an off-campus apartment complex shortly after a group of African American students moved in. In the last few years, foreign-born graduate students (who comprise about a third of graduate students) living in the Northgate area were made the target of violence by local residents as they went to and from classes. With the exception of the last instance, however, none felt that the University took an active enough role in helping to remedy the situation. Students interviewed suggested the need for a university-wide "zero-

tolerance” policy towards discrimination, perhaps even the creation of a campus response team, whose task would be to immediately deal with incidents of discrimination on campus. Multicultural Services, Gender Information and Education Services, and Student Counseling Services are all existing campus offices whose resources might also be applied to this effort.

Finally, to help alleviate racial, gender, and religious discrimination at TAMU and make the academic and social environment more welcoming for every member of the campus community, faculty, staff, students, and administrators should take advantage of the diversity-training programs that are available to them.