

DIVERSITY ISSUES IN THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

**Diversity Review and Planning Task Force
College of Agriculture
University of Kentucky**

April, 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background The Diversity Review and Planning Task Force for the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture was formed by Dean M. Scott Smith with the charge to review the College's recent progress and current status of diversity initiatives and to provide recommendations for enhancing these efforts. The scope of the Task Force included all facets of College programs including its instruction, research, extension and service missions. The Task Force began its work with the mutual understanding that diversity in all forms and at all levels must be seen as a vital component of ensuring the vitality of intellectual life within the institution and ensuring the responsiveness of our College to all communities in the Commonwealth. In pursuing its charge, the Task Force assessed a wide array of issues including current diversity efforts, civil rights reviews, statistics related to students and employees, and issues facing members of our community.

State of Diversity in the College As a recipient of Federal funds, civil rights and provision of equal opportunities are overseen for the University of Kentucky by the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Labor. The College of Agriculture is additionally overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1981, the Department of Education issued a finding that vestiges of a former system of legal segregation remained in the Kentucky public higher education system. One of the primary findings from the 1992 USDA civil rights review related to the low number of African-American county extension agents. Since then, specific steps within the College have occurred to improve diversity, most recently the creation of this Task Force. Within their mandates, these efforts have experienced moderate success. Recommendations by this Task Force seek to enhance these efforts and foster change in some existing practices and procedures within the College to further diversity efforts.

Data Collection Data on employees and students provided by UK Equal Opportunity Office, UK Cooperative Extension Service, College of Agriculture Legal Affairs, and College of Agriculture Student Services were examined. For employees who are African American, more often than not we have failed to meet our employment goals in nearly every employment category and there has been very little change in employment numbers since 1993. For employees who are women, despite the increase in total numbers, the College remains under its employment goals in many employment categories, including faculty. For students, while the number of undergraduates who are African American has increased, the number of students from other minority groups has not. Graduate enrollment of African Americans remains low in the College, sometimes nonexistent, especially at the doctoral level. Since 1993, the number of undergraduate and graduate students who are women increased consistently.

Issue Identification As a result of its work, the Diversity Task Force identified over 30 "key issues." Among these, 5 common themes emerged: organizational structure, recruitment and hiring, retention, reward structure, and environment. Overall, the Task Force found a need to increase actions, outreach, and accountability targeting diversity in all forms and at all levels within the College of Agriculture. Some of the specific recommendations include the need for an institutional support unit reporting directly to the Dean which would coordinate efforts and provide broad-based support for all diversity related efforts throughout the College. Other issues addressed include enhancing existing diversity efforts; providing adequate staffing, resources and clear lines of authority; instituting dedicated actions directed at visibility, recruitment and hiring; and increasing accountability to College administrators for diversity efforts.

Ongoing Process Each of the issues and recommendations raised in this report are integrated and inter-related. No single section, just as no single action, can stand alone. Moreover, this report cannot be seen as an end in itself but as a **living document**; one that is intended to change College practices and be part of an ongoing dialogue. Just as administrative leadership is critical and essential, so too is the commitment and specific actions of all of us in the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture. It is the hope of this Diversity Task Force that the work we have done and present in this report will add to our ability as a College community to meet that commitment.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

With this report, the Diversity Review and Planning Task Force has endeavored to assess a wide array of issues surrounding diversity within the College of Agriculture. We have reviewed previous accomplishments and discussed efforts left undone. We worked to identify specific areas for improvement. In doing this, we have sought advice and input from a broad array of individuals and groups.

In developing recommendations, we wanted to be both specific and broad. Some of the recommendations included here were also recommended by previous diversity related efforts in our College and University.

Each of the recommendations raised in this report are also seen as parts of an integrated whole. For example, obtaining a critical mass of minority/women faculty, staff, and students means that there would be multiple voices within departments and multiple role models to further recruitment efforts. Consequently, no single recommendation, just as no single action, stands alone. All areas and issues have important contributions to make to the overall College goals of being a dynamic, inclusive, diverse, and welcoming institution. As a result, just as administrative leadership is critical and essential, we all share in this responsibility.

Implementing these recommendations means that diversity must not be just an administrative requirement. Rather, it must be part of a broader philosophy, one that articulates and understands that we as an institution cannot achieve our goals of serving all people and achieving excellence in education and scholarship without diversity.

While the full list of recommendations is expanded on throughout sections of this report with a complete listing in the Appendix, recommendations can be organized into three broad themes: **Action, Outreach, and Accountability**. Some examples of each include the following:

Action

- Increase actions targeting diversity in all forms and at all levels;
- Increase the number of African American and other minorities in all job categories and the number of women in administrative and faculty positions;
- Establish an institutional support unit that reports directly to the Dean of the College of Agriculture. This office will assist in all efforts related to diversity and inclusivity within the College and be a clearinghouse for needed resources and support;
- Create a standing diversity advisory committee that reports to the Dean of the College of Agriculture until the above institutional support unit is established. Once this unit is established, this advisory committee should assess progress towards achieving College diversity goals;
- Ensure adequate and dedicated staffing, support, financial resources, and clear lines of authority for diversity related efforts;

- Strengthen existing diversity efforts in student recruitment and retention and in Cooperative Extension by replacing the current single position with dual responsibilities with two separate positions, one dedicated to student recruitment and one dedicated to Cooperative Extension and other College of Agriculture employee efforts;
- Establish mandatory diversity and retention training programs for all department chairs and supervisors;
- More fully utilize the University of Kentucky's resources for targeted minority faculty hiring;
- Streamline the hiring process for extension agents and ensure that the interviewing committee includes a diversity of members;
- Establish a procedure within the College for search committees to follow for advertising positions to ensure a diverse candidate pool, (e.g. University of Florida process described in the Appendix). Department chairs and search committees should be accountable to the Dean for implementing this process;
- Examine College efforts regarding spousal placement assistance, family friendly policies, and assistance in family moving issues such as children, aging parents, and other families members;
- Develop a "Diversity Support Award" for specialized diversity-related research, discipline specific diversity scholarship, and/or curriculum development;
- Similar to that originally recommended in 1990 by the Office of Minority Affairs, develop incentives for hiring minority and women graduate assistants (such as partial College funding of assistantships);

Outreach

- Increase visibility of the importance of diversity within the College by providing visible leadership at all levels and showcasing success in the media and public venues;
- Establish a website devoted to all aspects of diversity in the College of Agriculture which is clearly accessible from the College home page;
- Ensure that the Minority Recruitment and Retention position is on the College organizational chart and web pages so that it is a clear and visible point of contact;
- Develop and fund a Diversity in Agriculture lecture series that both highlights work in the College, includes outside invited speakers, and is advertised University-wide;
- Expand recruitment efforts to work more closely with county offices in hiring of local staff. Work with county offices and councils to increase diversity by exploring linkages with local groups and organizations;
- Continue to support and increase the resources for, and visibility of the College's chapter of MANRRS (The National Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences: <http://www.ca.uky.edu/manrrs>);

- Increase the support for, and visibility of, the Kentucky Diversity Network in Cooperative Extension;
- Consider establishment of a Minority Staff Network group, similar to the Kentucky Diversity Network;

Accountability

- Establish mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of diversity efforts at all levels;
- Provide information regarding contacts and resources available if difficult circumstances arise – department chairs, College administrators, UK Academic Ombud, UK Women’s Studies program, UK Office of Minority Affairs, UK President’s Commission on Women, UK President’s Commission on Diversity, UK Office of Equal Opportunity.
- Develop accountability procedures for documenting all hiring processes and decisions to ensure that the processes are inclusive in both intent and effect;
- Develop a process to hold department chairs and search committees accountable to meet diversity goals;
- Develop an internal database and tracking system to assess retention and graduation rates of students within our College;
- Conduct a survey on the current climate within our College, including perceptions and attitudes towards diversity, and provide mechanisms for follow-up based on the results;
- Conduct an ongoing assessment of salary administration for women and minorities to ensure equality and develop a plan to address inequities, if they exist;
- Construct standards for expectations regarding service and develop a reward system when these standards are met or exceeded;

While we have sought to provide specific recommendations, this summary list and this document cannot be considered an end in itself. It must be part of an ongoing dialogue and conscientious process to increase our responsiveness around the diversity of our institution.

Success and sustainability mean that we must continually work to identify barriers and provide visible support for activities that contribute to ensuring an environment within which everyone can study, work, and learn. We must work to ensure that our institutional structure reflects our level of commitment.

Diversity in all forms and at all levels must be seen as a vital component of ensuring the vitality of intellectual life within the institution and ensuring the responsiveness of our College to all communities in the Commonwealth.

How we go about achieving this is up to the commitment and actions of all of us in the University of Kentucky’s College of Agriculture.