

Campus Diversity Plan-DRAFT

College Mission

The State University of New York at Geneseo, nationally recognized as a center of excellence in undergraduate education, is a public liberal arts college with selected professional and master's level programs. It combines a rigorous curriculum and a rich co-curricular life to create a learning-centered environment. The entire college community works together to develop socially responsible citizens with skills and values important to the pursuit of an enriched life and success in the world.

Geneseo respects the unique contributions of each individual to the campus community and considers diversity as an essential set of strategies for realizing the College mission of excellence in education. Diversity, conceived broadly as respect for, curiosity about and opportunities extended to individuals from diverse backgrounds, promotes excellence by fostering critical thinking, encouraging language and other cross-cultural competencies, and enlarging the set of perspectives that bear on cognitive outcomes.

Diversity is an integral part of Geneseo's mission as a public liberal arts college that provides broad access to an honor's quality education for the citizens of New York State and elsewhere.

Benefits of Diversity

The results of empirical analysis confirm that diversity is important to a sound liberal education in the twenty-first century and for preparing students for full participation in a diverse society and success in an increasingly global environment. Not only is diversity essential in furthering the educational mission of Geneseo to attract excellent students and to prepare these students to become the extraordinary leaders of our communities, but it is also essential in creating a more dynamic learning and working environment for our Geneseo community.

More specifically, research has indicated that serious engagement of diversity in the curriculum, along with linking classroom and out-of-class opportunities, positively affects students' attitudes and awareness about diversity (Daryl G. Smith, et al. 1997. *Diversity Works: The Emerging Picture of How Students Benefit*). Achieving diversity will assure that, across the board, they will be afforded an expanded range of contacts and experiences – the contacts and experiences that will be needed in a marketplace that has become increasingly global and which can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints (Brief for General Motors Corp. as Amicus Curiae 3-4).

Research has indicated that the benefits of diversity extend well beyond the outcomes traditionally associated with diversity. For example, diversity is associated with:

1. increasing students' commitment to education (Smith et al., 1997)
2. increasing students' involvement with and connection to the college (Smith et al., 1997)
3. stimulating critical thinking (Gurin, 2002)
4. opening students' minds to problem solving from multiple perspectives (Gurin, 2002)
5. assisting individuals in dealing with the conflicts that different perspectives sometimes create (Gurin, 2002)
6. building consensus among people with different viewpoints
7. creating a network of future leaders in all academic disciplines

Engaging Diversity

Each major division of the College conducts ongoing diversity-related activities and initiatives. Student and Campus Life sponsors diversity activities through the Center for Community, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, and the residence halls. The Office of Multicultural Affairs and Services sponsors Cultural Harmony Week every October. There is a Vice President's Diversity Grant to encourage innovative approaches to improving the diversity climate on campus. Academic Affairs has a diversity plan and requires each academic department to report on efforts it has made each year to advance diversity. Students take classes and perform research with Geneseo's nationally-recognized scholars in such fields as African-American literature and culture, Women's studies, sociology of gender, Latin American Studies, Native American history, Asian Studies, and ancient civilizations of Mexico and Central America. Geneseo's Xerox Center for Multicultural Education and the Teaching Learning Center provide faculty and students with professional development and cutting-edge support for new research and learning in this critical area of study for all educators. Administration and Finance periodically sponsors diversity workshops and speakers. The Affirmative Action Officer periodically revises the College Affirmative Action Plan and works with search committees to ensure that diversity, equal opportunity, and Affirmative Action principles are integral to the search process.

At the College level, President Dahl established The President's Commission on Diversity and Community in 1998 to improve diversity training of staff, expand curricular and co-curricular programming, and enhance campus climate. In its early years, it gathered information, identified areas of concern, and made recommendations for change. In recent years, it has become more actively involved in directly fostering, supporting, and modeling community engagement. Since 2002, the college has adopted 35 recommendations made by the Commission.

In 2003 Geneseo developed and adopted a *Statement on Diversity and Community* that defines in broad terms how the campus defines "diversity" and calls for "all members of our community to share responsibility for the ongoing work of continually recreating a sense of inclusion, belonging, and empowerment, so that together we will achieve our individual and collective aims, and experience the intellectual liberation that is at the heart of the educational enterprise." Each year, the College brings to campus a distinguished leader or scholar to work closely with students, faculty and staff on issues related to diversity and deliver a major public lecture on diversity and society.

Background

In 2006-2007 the Assessment Committee of the President's Commission on Diversity and Community began tracking information on several diversity indicators. This information raised several questions related to structural diversity, important outcomes for students of color, and the campus climate. Specifically,

- 1) Although there has been an increase in structural (compositional) diversity at the College, why has this been accompanied by a small decrease in retention and graduation rates for students of color?
- 2) Why does Geneseo score relatively low on the Student Opinion Survey question about racial harmony while it scores relatively high on other questions related to campus community? Although absolute scores on this measure have increased each of the last three times the SOS has been administered, Geneseo's ranking among SUNY comprehensives on this question has gone from #4 to #10. The College also ranks #10 on the question, Understanding & appreciating ethnic/cultural diversity & individual differences.
- 3) What is behind the NSSE results that indicate better diversity outcomes for first-year students than for seniors? Although absolute scores for seniors have increased each of the last three times the NSSE has been administered, they also have been lower than scores for the first-year students each time.

The Assessment Committee recommended the creation of a campus-wide diversity plan to place these indicators in a broader context. Such a plan would enable the College to move toward unifying the many diversity initiatives that already exist, point to areas that may need to be developed, and provide goals and objectives that can be assessed to measure progress. The full Diversity Commission accepted this proposal which subsequently was endorsed by the campus Strategic Planning Group. The SPG added an objective to the College strategic plan that reads, *Develop and implement a campus diversity plan that will identify diversity goals and objectives, performance indicators, and a means of assessing progress on an annual basis.* The President's Commission on Diversity and Community was charged with developing the plan, and the SPG will discuss implementation once the plan is developed. The following goals and objectives comprise the plan developed by the Commission.

Goals and Objectives

1) Recruit, support and retain a diverse student body

Discussion

To achieve a diverse student body we need to develop programs and incentives that will encourage students of diverse background to actively consider SUNY Geneseo as a desirable institution of higher education. Recruitment alone, however, cannot bring about sustainable diversity; we also need to develop support systems in both academic and student life programs that are conducive to diversity. Our programs need to generate success stories in diversity that can serve to spread the word on behalf of our institution. This would help us reach a critical mass of diversity that might become self-sustaining and self-enriching.

Objectives

- 1.1 Improve awareness of programs and facilities that help attract students of different ethnic and demographic origins.
- 1.2 Institute strategies that increase the enrollment of students from demographic groups currently underrepresented at Geneseo, and achieve a critical mass of these individuals.
- 1.3 Develop strategies that support the retention of diverse ethnic and demographic groups currently underrepresented at Geneseo.

Assessment

2) Recruit, support and retain a diverse faculty, staff, and administration

Discussion

Geneseo has made progress in increasing the number of female faculty members and faculty of color. However, we need to continue our efforts to reduce the barriers to appointing and retaining international scholars, senior women, people of color, and people with disabilities.

Objectives

Recruit

- 2.1 Increase the number of applicants who will contribute to the diversity of faculty, staff, and administration.
- 2.2 Establish and maintain search procedures that ensure equal treatment of all candidates.
- 2.3 Meet and/or exceed the goals established in the Affirmative Action plan.

Support and Retain

2.4 Increase retention and promotion of high quality faculty and staff.

2.5 Develop program level diversity plans.

2.6 Increase programming that enhances the climate for faculty, staff, and students and thereby, contributes to the retention of faculty, staff, and students of color.

Assessment

3) Make international learning, experiences and perspectives important components of a Geneseo education

Discussion

Various international programs and activities have developed over the past several years without much overall coordination. Improved coordination and planning can enhance the effectiveness of international experiences by using resources efficiently and by establishing better connections between and among programs.

Recently, the U. S. Department of State approved Geneseo's application for an Exchange Visitor Program. Geneseo is now able to process J-1 visas. This ability may provide opportunities to address international programs more holistically.

Objectives

3.1 Develop an organizational plan for international programs.

3.2 Improve the integration of international students into the College community.

3.3 Increase the integration of students' international learning

3.4 Increase off-campus national and international experiences of students.

Assessment

4) Create and maintain an inclusive campus community in which all members flourish and feel valued

Discussion

The College Statement on Diversity and Community, "calls all members of our community to share responsibility for the ongoing work of continually recreating a sense of inclusion, belonging, and empowerment." Although achieving the other goals in this plan will move us toward this aim, it is helpful to highlight the importance of an inclusive campus community.

Objectives

4.1 Increase awareness of the College value and definition of diversity.

4.2 Increase knowledge of potential needs and relevant services for all members of the community.

4.3 Increase social interaction among the variety of people on campus.

4.4 Maintain a campus environment that enables people with disabilities to participate fully in campus life.

4.5 Increase the availability of community services that contribute to the support and retention of under-represented groups.

Assessment

5) Increase student knowledge and appreciation of diverse populations and cultures

Discussion

The purpose of this goal is to provide students with learning experiences, both curricular and extracurricular, that will facilitate their interaction with diverse populations and a range of different perspectives, thus enabling them to successfully navigate an evolving and diverse world.

Objectives

5.1 Increase students' appreciation of and ability to interact with people from a variety of backgrounds.

5.2 Increase students' knowledge of international and domestic cultures

5.3 Increase students' ability to articulate the advantages of diversity.

Assessment