

**Rutgers University Senate  
Student Affairs Committee**

**Report and Recommendations on Charge S-0406, Tolerance and Sensitivity  
April 2007**

Report to charge: S-0406: Tolerance/Sensitivity: Explore and recommend ways in which tolerance, sensitivity, and open dialogue may be promoted at Rutgers (RU), particularly among students, in media content, housing and other areas.

The SAC has been charged to “explore and recommend the ways in which tolerance, sensitivity and open dialogue may be promoted at Rutgers.” To this end, one of the committee’s goals was to document the nature and extent of diversity in programming and policies as well as perceptions of the lack of dialogue surrounding issues of diversity. The SAC felt this charge was somewhat vague in its language. Nevertheless, the committee decided to consider it, because we regard these issues to be essential as our university continues to meet excellent standards of higher education.

The SAC began addressing charge S-0406 at the close of the spring 2006 semester. Our process began with a thorough review of the existing university policies regarding verbal assault, defamation, and harassment, as well as web sites, programs, offices, departments, centers, and organizations that actively participate in issues of diversity programming and training. We also reviewed the recently released Campus Climate Report. We issued a preliminary report to the EC on March 24, 2006 in which we recommended that a task force be gathered with members of the Senate SAC, EOC, the Bias Prevention Committee, the Committee to Advance our Common Cause, and the Student Affairs office. This past semester, we continued to meet with student, faculty, and administrative members of each campus to learn how their campus locally supports cultural sensitivity and to identify areas of strength and weakness. This report serves to reflect the findings from our meetings this year.

University Policies regarding verbal assault, defamation, and harassment:

For employees of Rutgers University, the Rutgers University human resources home page (<http://uhr.rutgers.edu/index.html>) links to the President’s Commitment to Diversity and Equal Opportunity which states: “Rutgers has had a long-standing commitment to equal opportunity and diversity. We continually strive to build and sustain a multicultural community through the application of basic affirmative action strategies in hiring and promotion. Those strategies include, but are not limited to, the use of broad and transparent searches to identify diverse pools of qualified candidates for faculty and staff positions at the University; creating and maintaining a climate where members of all groups are valued and welcomed; and fostering an environment in which all are encouraged to participate fully, are accorded respect, and are acknowledged for their special contributions.”<sup>1</sup> The human resources website provides links for members of the Rutgers community to the policies which inform Rutgers employees of their rights and grievance procedures; please see <http://uhr.rutgers.edu/ee/NoticePostings.htm> for more information.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://uhr.rutgers.edu/ee/PresidentsLetterOnCommitment.htm>

While the committee did identify a number of referral sources encouraging multicultural practices<sup>2</sup> we did not identify any mandatory training for staff that would address issues of and/or promoting a space for open dialogue surrounding any topics of cultural sensitivity, discrimination, and/or multiculturalism. It is particularly important to create an atmosphere supportive of allowing a student to learn in an environment that is absent of any perceived bias. The members of the SAC reason that those RU anti-discrimination policies would become substantially more effective in encouraging a multicultural atmosphere if opportunities to examine one's own potential prejudices or to learn of others' life-experiences became a mandatory part of staff training and staff development at all levels of employment.

According to the interim Middle States Report, Rutgers has set addressing Diversity and Tolerance as one of its highest priorities. To that end, the administration has recruited faculty representative of the cultural pluralism of this State. This effort is to be commended. The SAC, however, feels there needs to be a mechanism in place to ensure that the retention rates amongst these faculty members are stable. In order to accomplish this, the SAC believes a comprehensive training program, similar to Continuing Education be put in place for the faculty. The SAC considers ongoing education of both the faculty and the staff in this area will only lead to an environment that promotes true acceptance of differences from the top down.

For students, the information and the policies appear universal; however, the procedures for a student to follow when experiencing discrimination vary and are dependent upon both the circumstance and the campus. In the opinion of this committee, this lack of consistency can create a navigational nightmare for a student who wishes to report discrimination or who hopes to address discriminatory actions or practices when they appear. Without clear policies and procedures in place across all campuses, students are more likely to feel dissatisfied with the results and the institution itself may appear unaccountable. Both students and staff identified this particular problem during the interview process.

The SAC has identified three distinct arenas where students may face discrimination: in the classroom, in the residence halls, and the more general campus atmosphere. Because there can be different players involved in producing a discriminatory environment, different means may be required both to address and resolve problems and disputes, depending on whether the discrimination is viewed as student-to-student or faculty/staff-to-student. There may be a variety of procedures for ongoing investigations as well. While all three campuses have different procedures for addressing issues of discrimination, they have each acknowledged that the process varies depending on who is involved in the discriminatory act(s). Therefore the SAC suggests a coherent policy be set in place which addresses all courses of action to be taken with relevance to the specific type of discrimination perceived and for the policies to be clearly published so students may play an active role in their own advocacy.

As is the case for the staff, there is no standard and/or required venue for open dialogue surrounding multicultural matters for students. While the SAC does note that each campus has its own opportunity for creating a space for this dialogue, this dialogue is not required and therefore is left to the discretion of the administration. It appears that these discussions do occur

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<sup>2</sup> To review more RU diversity links visit: <http://www.diversityweb.org/>, <http://diversityweb.rutgers.edu/>, <http://www.diversityweb.org/>

within our residence life programming. This leads the SAC to suggest we (1) consider approaching residence halls for more advice as to how we can encourage open dialogue for multicultural purposes and (2) consider the large number of RU family (commuters, faculty and staff) who are not receiving this information. In general, we find that there is nothing to serve as support for the existing policies, and that the topics of cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism deserve more spaces for structured learning.

Offices, departments, centers and organizations:

The SAC has identified a number of offices, departments, centers, and organizations that either address issues of discrimination, serve to provide cultural education and/or a multicultural perspective, or create a space for open dialogue to discuss multicultural topics.

While the agencies belonging to this category are multiple and varied, they are not evenly distributed nor are they easy to access. The majority of these offices exist on the New Brunswick campus. Their services are open to all RU students, but they are not demographically accessible, nor are they well advertised. It is the opinion of this committee that a single web page be designed that will highlight these offices. Ideally, this web page should be linked to the President's web page as well as other sources to facilitate the access to information. In addition, a creative approach to study how their programs can be accessed via the Internet should be strongly considered. Lastly, the SAC considers it important to affirm that all university-funded entities of any kind become accessible to all members of each of three Rutgers campuses. As we have noted above, there appears to be a number of offices and committees that have the same goal. An assessment of the various offices and services offered, along with a program to reduce and centralize services, is necessary in order to provide services that are relevant to meeting the needs of the entire Rutgers community. Therefore, the allocation of funding in these departments should be considered as this examination moves forward.

Information from discussions at SAC meetings:

We met with university administrators and faculty to understand how their offices and classrooms currently support and sustain the existing efforts of our University to advance multicultural growth and understanding. We invited students into the conversation to hear directly about their experiences and their exposure to diverse and culturally sensitive issues. The SAC committee asked each guest to respond to the following questions. In this report, answers are summarized and provided as one response organized by question.

1. What is your role in the planning, implementing, supporting funding and/or evaluating diversity activities on campus?
2. What is your response to the Campus Climate Report?
3. What can your office do to push forward diversity activities, support currently existing programs and ensure that existing anti-discrimination policies are enforced?
4. Do you vision the University Senate as an effective conduit in the development and sustainability of diversity programming? If so, how?
5. In light of the current budget situation, how can your office encourage creative programming that is fiscally conservative?

(A) *CAMDEN CAMPUS October 2006*. Guest speakers were Assistant Dean of Students Allison Wisniewski, Coordinator of Campus Involvement Pat Wallace, RUCSGA President Max Kind, EOF Student Advisor Natasha Tursi, RUC School of Business Dean Muse, and Associate Provost Mary Beth Daisey.

- (1) Within residence life and housing every resident assistant (student position) is responsible for three programs. Of those programs 6 - 9 must cover a diversity topic. While the Student Government Association does include trainings, there has been no diversity training scheduled for this academic year. Within the EOF program there are summer programs geared to bridge discrepancies between students. The workshops EOF sponsors are opened to all students but rarely do other RUC students attend. However, it is important to note that these workshops are opened over the summer during a time frame when the majority of RUC students are not on campus. The EOF department often experiences marginalization and, as a result, their programming potentials are limited. The Associate Provost's office oversees the Office of Campus Involvement and therefore the office's efforts to promote multicultural programming and to encourage inter-cultural dialogue are focused within the Office of Campus Involvement. Within the College of Arts and Sciences, one diversity course is required. However, it is questionable if this course meets the needs of promoting cultural sensitivity and diversity dialogue. There is no required diversity training, workshop or staff development in the area of cultural sensitivity for RU-Camden faculty.
- (2) There was consistency in reporting that the campus climate report (CCR) did not reflect all of what has been heard by RUC staff from students. Considering that qualitative results were not published alongside of the quantitative responses, there is concern regarding how the data was interpreted. The CCR clearly demonstrates there is social injustice on the campus. There was a consensus that there is more beneath the issues that the survey cannot address.
- (3) For diversity programming to be successful it should be creative, balance interest with learning, and be backed by administrative support starting from the President's office, to the Provost on down. The dialogue should be deliberative. The programs should be inclusive and derive internally rather than sourcing out for diversity resources. More resources are needed in these areas. It is desirable that administration and faculty be educated as well.
- (4) The committee for multicultural affairs has been non-functioning for a year. With no committee, there is no funding, nor is there a formal method to request funding from the multicultural committee. Students need to be encouraged to participate in all areas of diversity programming by the administration, staff and faculty. A major initiative to diversify faculty needs to be devised. RUC faculty largely under represents the diversity of the students. A formal method of reporting student concerns should be structured and implemented. For example, the Vice President for Student Affairs could be required to meet at least twice a semester with students from Newark and Camden. A position for a chief diversity officer should be created where programming and restructuring can be incorporated at all levels. Space should be allocated for the function of this position and for programming to occur. For programming to be successful, faculty must support it from the classroom. Campus wide diversity/multicultural activities should continue to be a priority.

(B) *NEW BRUNSWICK CAMPUS January 2007*. (Note that this was a truncated meeting due to our task of having to evaluate vitas for student representatives to the Board of Trustees). Guests were Brian Rose and Meredith Davis-Johnson.

- (1) The Department of Student Affairs handles student grievances and/or issue of compliance. Most resolutions are internal. The office deals with issues on a reactive basis. There appears to currently be no proactive programming.
- (2) No response was given to the Campus Climate Report.
- (3) It is anticipated that offices on the New Brunswick campus will improve after the reorganization. However, at this time there is no programmatic structure in place to address the issues presented in this charge.
- (4) Because the Senate is a mixture of so many constituencies in one space, it is a good place to identify issues, set agendas and priorities, and introduces them to the appropriate players.
- (5) Budget cuts make it difficult but cannot be used as an excuse to move forward initiatives once they have been identified.

(C) *NEWARK CAMPUS February 2007*. Guests were Cary Booker, Gerald Massenburg and response by Maggie Shiffrar.

- (1) “Nationwide Newark is the most diverse campus and with that comes responsibility to balance choice with opportunity. The mix of students drives the university to address topics of multiculturalism.”<sup>3</sup> RUN uses curriculum and programming to create the balance referred to above. For example, theme months which range in their topics from World Month to LGBTQ month (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-gendered, Queer and Questioning), in which student groups and administrative offices for student programming are encouraged to observe. A four credit class promoting a space for dialogue in the psychology department is titled Health and Social Justice. A number of programs which either support or generate multicultural programming and/or dialogue were mentioned such as: TRIO program, R.E.A.D.Y. program, Pre-College program, Pre-Law Academy, Saturday Academy, EOF recruitment and retention programs, and Unity Theater, all of which serve students that are primarily Latino, African American, International and/or economically underprivileged. However, it was noted that while all of these programs exist in support of diverse populations and multicultural discussions, there are no programs or services providing direct activities.
- (2) Our guests viewed the Campus Climate report as one way to look at the diversity on campus. There were some concerns with the broad sample. In particular, Newark response rate was the lowest of all three campuses, which may perhaps lead to a number of suggestions that could be further researched. Each member spoke of their concern as the Campus Climate Report that exposed the significant number of under-represented individuals who have felt discrimination. There was also a united concern amongst our guests of the use of the word tolerance. “Tolerance is not an efficient seal. In my mind it is not enough for members of minority groups to feel tolerance at Rutgers. Instead, my goal for Rutgers-Newark is the achievement of a real celebration

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<sup>3</sup> Quote from administrator of RUN during the SAC meeting on March 16, 2007 at the RUN campus.

of and deep respect for diversity”<sup>4</sup>. These comments in particular led the SAC to discuss the strong need for Rutgers University to thoroughly consider its goals regarding diversity and the importance of employing the most suitable use of language to remain consistent with and to promote the desired outcome.

- (3) Each member spoke of the need for departments to become more creative when considering ways to incorporate diversity, cultural sensitivity, and open dialogue within their departments. One suggestion was for each department to include this language in their mission. This idea in particular stemmed from the likelihood some departments may consider multicultural programming, diversity topics, cultural sensitivity and/or promoting open dialogue irrelevant to their operation or unsuited to their subject matter. Similar to thoughts of the Camden campus, living learning/residence communities are an opportunity for stronger programming in this area. Members of the RU-Newark campus also found freshman orientation and freshman seminars to be a place where more effective training could be utilized to introduce concepts of multiculturalism, the policies in existence to support one's right and the means to access them. Freshman orientation can also be used as a space to introduce these ideas, while freshman seminars could expand upon concepts and challenge students and their professors to engage more critically within the topic matter. Freshman orientation and seminars can both act as conduits to encourage students to create, implement, and participate in programming. Grant initiatives for faculty members to create diversity trainings for their peers, as well as multicultural subjects within their departments should be made more readily available. The university should capitalize on student initiatives that promote multicultural understanding and/or address issues of cultural sensitivity. The University needs to consider a “diversity department” local hub or center where students can receive leadership training while faculty can utilize the services of programs to promote teaching excellence. Lastly, the University should use the moments when discrimination occurs to address issues of discrimination rather than to avoid them out of concern for handling the controversy.
- (4) In regards to how the University Senate can best serve as a conduit in developing and sustaining diversity activities, there were clear suggestions. The Senate can suggest that Rutgers should “spread the wealth” in regards to where resources are and who is able to receive them. The Senate might urge the University to create a more coherent and structured path for policies and cross-curricular programming, generating a stronger presence of diversity within the Senate structure and reminding ourselves and the University at large that words alone are not enough. A passive approach will not generate an actively multicultural coexistence. This approach is imperative if Rutgers wishes to maintain its Middle States Accreditation.
- (5) The budget cuts have challenged the viability of every office on campus, new and old programming alike. However, this topic cannot be cast aside because we do not have the funds to address it. Rutgers already provides a number of programs to deal with this thorny issue. A thorough examination of the level and number of offices that provide comparable programming will reveal that services can be consolidated. New programs could then be offered without presenting new challenges to an already strained budget. Rather, the University must formally claim its purpose in this area. If

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<sup>4</sup> Quote from administrators during the SAC meeting on March 16, 2007 at the RUN campus and faculty submission received via a written document in response to questions.

indeed multiculturalism and diversity is a high priority, then it must be supported financially and philosophically. Additionally, Rutgers would benefit by continuing to use the resources currently existing and further to combine resources across campuses.

*(D) Discussions with President McCormick and Sybil James- March 2007 joint SAC/EOC meeting.*

The following questions were posed to the President:

1. What are your reactions to the campus climate surveys?
2. What are planned efforts regarding diversity and tolerance programming, unit reorganization and/or enhancement on the New Brunswick campus?
3. How might current or planned efforts toward diversity and tolerance be duplicated on the Newark and/or Camden campus?
4. Do you think that it is possible, feasible or desirable to have University-wide diversity and tolerance programming covering all campuses (that is, including Newark and Camden)?
5. Given the task force recommendations, as well as the findings from the campus climate reports, what would be your vision in any plan to “infuse” tolerance and diversity programming into orientations, curriculum, or policies (aside from those reported in March 2006)? How would (could) this vision translate to the Camden and Newark campuses?
6. Given the budget reductions and unfortunate cuts throughout the University, are the recommendations regarding diversity and tolerance still a priority in discussions about improving and/or expanding such services to students?
7. How might members of the Senate Students Affairs and Equal Opportunity committees interface with members of the Implementation committees and/or University administrators in order to help in their assessments, provide input, or create such a prioritized list of services?

Dr. McCormick responded that while he felt the results of the Campus Climate Survey were relatively positive, there is still work to do. Diversity programming is available to all campuses and the NB campus is in the process of unifying their new student orientation programming. Newark and Camden Provosts are taking individual steps to address problems (including retention of under-represented student populations) on their campuses. Each campus is somewhat unique and therefore has unique challenges. He discussed one credit courses for incoming freshmen to be initiated at Rutgers -NB.

Sybil James is the University Ombudsperson and she described the role of her office, which is primarily to “assist in the resolution of conflicts”. She is working on the NB office and hopes in the future to develop this model for the other campuses.

Following the meeting(s) suggestions were forwarded by members of SAC to improve the current status of multicultural/diversity programming and encourage space for culturally sensitive dialogue to flourish:

1. New student orientation programming focusing on diversity sensitivity should also be available to upper classes.
2. New faculty and staff members should receive diversity sensitivity programming.

3. Diversity offices should be proactive in devising ways to retain students of color.
4. Investigate the possibility that student organizations who provide diversity programming receive increased financial support.
5. Office of Student Affairs should develop an assessment plan for diversity programs/activities.
6. The issue (problem) of *access to information* regarding programming or resources is important to assess.

Therefore, the Student Affairs Committee makes the following formal recommendation to be considered by the Senate:

Whereas; the SAC finds it particularly important to create an atmosphere supportive of allowing students to learn in an environment that is absent of any perceived bias.

Whereas; Rutgers University's anti-discrimination policies would become substantially more effective in encouraging a multicultural atmosphere if opportunities to examine one's own potential prejudices or to learn of others' life-experiences became a mandatory part of staff training and staff development at all levels of employment.

Whereas; there needs to be a mechanism in place to ensure that the retention rates amongst our faculty of under-represented populations are stable. In order to accomplish this, a comprehensive training program, similar to Continuing Education, should be instituted for all faculty.

Whereas; without clear policies and procedures in place across all campuses, students are more likely to feel dissatisfied with the results leaving the institution itself to appear unaccountable.

Whereas; students need to take a strong role in their advocacy; a coherent policy must be set in place and remain easily accessible in order to encourage such behavior.

Whereas; there is no single source of referral for the many institutional programs we have which do support multicultural leadership and learning.

Whereas; after long investigation we find there is nothing to serve as support for the existing policies, and that the topics of cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism deserve more spaces for structured learning.

Whereas: since there is currently no creative approach to study how multi-cultural and diversity programs can be accessed via the Internet, one should be created.

Whereas; most Rutgers University funded entities are not accessible to all members of each of three Rutgers campuses.

Whereas; given the state of our current budget crisis, it is reasonable to consider ways in which we can arrive at cost effectiveness through resource sharing of existing programming and the centralization of offices and services.



**Therefore be it resolved:**

**A University task force to concentrate on, and to advance and promote, multicultural and diversity initiatives should be formed by the central administration at the University-wide level. Using this report as a resource document, that task force should begin a self-identified course of action consistent with this mission, and with the following suggested guidelines in mind. The task force should consider current diversity and multicultural programming alongside of new and combined initiatives. Cost effectiveness and resource sharing are essential to the viability of all further recommendations as Rutgers University continues to develop for the future within the constraints of budget cuts.**

- **This task force should include members of all three University campuses with representation from: the University Senate's Student Affairs, University Structure and Governance, Faculty Affairs, Equal Opportunities and Instruction and Curriculum Committees; the Bias Prevention Committee; the Committee to Advance our Common Purposes; and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. Membership should include, but should not be limited to, representatives from those groups.**
- **Task force meeting logistics should be such that no particular geographic/campus members bear a larger meeting-attendance burden. This could be accomplished by utilizing video conferencing, or by rotating and alternating geographical locations.**
- **The task force membership should be identified over the summer of 2007.**
- **The task force will have no fewer than three co-chairs; one representing each campus.**
- **In addition, the task force will examine the allocation of funding where university offices are considered in order to guarantee an equal distribution of fees, monies and services.**
- **The task force should report back to the University Senate and to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs so that its findings and recommendations may be considered resources for the Middle States accreditation process and for future policy-making considerations generally.**
- **The task force report should be distributed to each of the three campuses through their respective provosts or equivalent to ensure their awareness of its contents.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Valerie Johnson, Co-chair, Student Affairs Committee

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