

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
University Senate Equal Opportunities Committee Report and Recommendations
Regarding
The Task Force Report on Undergraduate Education
January 4, 2006

The **Equal Opportunities Committee** of the University Senate (EOC) was charged with the following:

Consider and make recommendations concerning the proposals of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education, as well as alternative proposals submitted by members of the university community, based on their implications for the diversity of the student body, the campus climate, and access to Rutgers, New Brunswick. In particular, include advice concerning the proposals dealing with dissolution of the arts and sciences colleges, changes in admissions standards and procedures, and centralization of authority over advising, residence-life programming, student centers, and counseling centers. As time permits, consider other aspects of the Task Force recommendations that are of particular concern to members of the Equal Opportunity Committee.

In preparing our report, the EOC members sought and received consultation from the following groups, departments, and constituencies: various Equal Opportunity Fund (EOF) offices at the University, the University Admissions office, the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes, as well as students and faculty from the New Brunswick/Piscataway, Camden, and Newark campuses. New Jersey census data were also reviewed. In addition, several committee members interviewed staff at other universities, (comparable to Rutgers), about their efforts to establish and maintain campus climates that are welcoming of women and persons of various ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. The EOC met on September 30th, October 21st, November 18th, and December 9th to synthesize our findings and develop our response.

We offer the following recommendations:

- 1) **Core Curriculum.** The EOC recommends that a diversity course be included in the core curriculum. We assert that such a course is distinguishable from a global studies course. Diversity courses provide a comparative framework for understanding religion, ethnicity, and culture, and also examine the intersection of race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation--all of which are issues undergraduates will face on campus and during their lives. During the implementation phase of the Task Force plan, departments should be encouraged to identify and/or develop courses that meet these objectives, and students should be able to choose from several such courses to fulfill this requirement. It should be noted that some diversity courses might have components that fulfill other requirements of the core, such as critical thinking, scientific inquiry, and reflective thinking.

- 2) Learning Communities. The EOC strongly urges that guidelines and objectives be established to ensure that such communities are inclusive of students of all races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations.
- 3) The EOC recognizes the tension between the University's twin goals of ensuring equity of standards through centralization while preserving the benefits of local programming and service delivery. For the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) local service delivery is essential to its success. Thus, even if administration of the EOF is centralized, services must stay integrated into the various campuses. For example, we recommend that EOF advisors stay on the various campuses so they remain easily accessible to the EOF students as well as the administrators and faculties of their respective campuses.
 - a. On a related note, the EOC strongly urges that the proposed Faculty Support Committee of the EOF consists of faculty who support its mission. We also recommend that EOF staff have significant input into the selection of these faculty.
- 4) Recruitment.
 - a. *Students.* Available admissions and New Jersey census data indicate that African American and Latino/a students are underrepresented on the New Brunswick/Piscataway campuses. The EOC asserts that the restructuring plan should include a strategy to ensure that our student body is at least as ethnically and racially diverse as the population of the state of New Jersey. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the University set firm, quantitative guidelines for admitting a student body that represents and reflects the diversity of the residents of the state of New Jersey. Due to changing immigration and demographic patterns, we urge that these guidelines be reviewed on a semi-annual basis. It has been said that New Jersey college students are among the state's biggest exports, and there is reason to believe that the state's most qualified minority students are pursuing their educations elsewhere. Therefore, we strongly advise that current efforts to identify and recruit promising, minority high school students to the University be strengthened and expanded. On a related note, we urge the same for the recruitment of minority Honors students. We also recommend that the University expand its current financial aid and scholarship programs to ensure that qualified but financially underprivileged minority students can attend Rutgers.
 - b. *Faculty.* Once again, available personnel and New Jersey census data indicate that African American and Latinos/as are underrepresented among the faculty at Rutgers. Adequate diversity on the faculty will not only assist us in recruiting diverse students, but will help provide the variety of viewpoints and perspectives necessary for scholarship to flourish. Thus, we recommend that the administration commit to improving faculty diversity by developing a clear, diverse faculty

recruitment plan with measurable objectives to which the University and its departments and schools will be accountable. Once again, the EOC urges that the University integrate such a plan into its restructuring.

- 5) Campus Climate. The preliminary campus climate report from the students identifies many areas of concern including discrimination and harassment experienced by African American, gay and lesbian, and female students. The EOC understands that there is currently a relatively uncoordinated patchwork of efforts to deal with these problems. Through the research of several committee members, the EOC has learned that many institutions comparable to Rutgers (University of Michigan, Ohio State, University of Kansas) have equal opportunity departments or multicultural centers whose charges are: 1) to ensure compliance with federal regulations on nondiscriminatory hiring, 2) to provide consultation to departments on minority faculty, staff, and student recruitment, 3) to provide sensitivity training for faculty, staff, and students, and 4) to process and resolve complaints of discrimination. These centers maintain their own dedicated staff, numbering anywhere from 8-30 people, and are led by directors who report to the Provost or the equivalent. The EOC recommends that during the implementation phase of the restructuring, a committee be appointed to establish a unified, coordinated effort to address issues of campus tolerance and diversity and to seriously consider establishing a centralized office/department like those found in similar institutions.

Respectfully submitted 12/26/05,

Michael C. LaSala, Ph.D., LCSW
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