

## **A Cultural Shift at UNI: Toward a Diverse and Inclusive Community**

**Purpose:** To create a deep cultural change to transform the University of Northern Iowa into a more diverse, inclusive and welcoming community. This will be achieved by: 1) improving support to students from underrepresented groups; 2) providing systematic opportunities for on-campus and off-campus interaction among members of diverse communities; 3) enhancing the treatment of diversity issues within our curriculum, and 4) recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff.

Following the model set down by the Foundations of Excellence project, which involved close cooperation between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, this project will involve university-wide teams of faculty, staff and students working together to identify areas of improvement and develop plans to address them. The first order of business will be an inventory of what we are already doing, including an inventory of our curriculum to identify gaps in subject areas that could further the goals of fostering a more diverse and inclusive UNI. Teams will gather evidence that establishes our needs and will consult empirical research to identify and recommend solutions with demonstrated track record of success. The solutions we offer below are suggestive of the types of projects the teams may consider in their deliberations and include some things that we may already be doing.

- I. **Support Every Student:** UNI must provide high quality support for all students, including students from underrepresented populations. Specific elements of this may include:
  - A. Academic support
    1. Engage in planning process to identify needs and develop appropriate solutions to improve academic support.
    2. Learning communities- Support the creation of living-learning communities related to diversity and social justice issues
  - B. Social support and mentoring
    1. Focus Center for Multicultural Education on student social and mentoring needs
    2. Systematically increasing the on-campus employment, leadership opportunity, and visibility of students from underrepresented populations. This includes hiring within academic units and encouraging students to work for and with faculty
- II. **Promote Inclusiveness and Understanding:** UNI must provide systematic opportunities for on-campus and off-campus interactions among people different from themselves. Specific elements may include:
  - A. Increase opportunities for community engagement (course-related; field experience/internship)
  - B. Showcase faculty, staff, and students' community engagement projects/efforts
  - C. Increase coordination of on-campus events to encourage people to interact with others on campus and with those in the community

- D. Increased internationalization of UNI student body and expansion of international opportunities for domestic students
- III. Enhance the treatment of diversity within our teaching and curriculum.** UNI must more intentionally promote and feature diversity-related issues in our classrooms and co-curricular activities where appropriate. Specific elements may include:
- A. Development of diversity certificate for faculty and staff modeled on CETL Teach UNI and advising certificates
  - B. Diversity curriculum infusion: faculty will be encouraged and rewarded for developing courses or course modules focused on diversity and inclusion. This can include May-term course development opportunities modeled on violence prevention infusion workshops.
  - C. Piloting of a course on social justice.
  - D. Looking for ways to add diversity component to the educational experience of all students, e.g., through changes to LAC or to University exit requirements
  - E. Recognition of faculty and staff excellence in creating cultural shift via Diversity Awards.
- IV. Recruit and retain diverse faculty and staff and foster a welcoming community**
- A. Develop clear plan for recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff across all areas of the university. Planning should consider creative strategies to attract people to campus, including more effective use of spousal hiring.
  - B. Development of and support for affinity groups for faculty from underrepresented groups
  - C. Encouraging more faculty interaction with one another and with larger community. These could be social (faculty mixers, social events with members of Waterloo community, other large employers) and/or could take the form of community service projects

### **Impact on UNI**

This project would have a significant impact on UNI and its academic quality. The Board of Regents, State of Iowa, has identified accessibility and student success among its key strategic goals. As we recruit broadly across Iowa and from out of state, fostering a positive learning and living environment for all students will be crucial to retaining them. In particular, although our interests in diversity are broad, we know that graduation rates for minority students still lag well behind our overall rate--about fifteen percentage points lower.<sup>1</sup> Beyond such metrics of student success, creating a truly inclusive community will help improve our students' ability to succeed in an increasingly diverse and globally-integrated society. By more intentionally weaving diversity-related themes throughout our curriculum, we will enhance the academic experience for our students. Finally, setting a goal and having a clear plan to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff will not only contribute to student learning, but will help create on campus an atmosphere where we can continuously assess and improve our diversity efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> According to an April 2015 Board of Regents Report, 6-year graduation rates were nearly fifteen percentage points lower for minority students than non-minority students (p. 8).  
[http://www.regents.iowa.gov/Meetings/DocketMemos/15Memos/March2015/0315\\_%20ESAC07.pdf](http://www.regents.iowa.gov/Meetings/DocketMemos/15Memos/March2015/0315_%20ESAC07.pdf)

## **Significance**

This project is significant, perhaps necessary, at this point in time. UNI must increase enrollment, including out-of-state enrollment, to assure our long-term fiscal health. Given this need, and given the increasing diversity of the state of Iowa, we cannot afford not to provide a welcoming learning environment for every student.<sup>2</sup> We cannot be an excellent university until we support all of our students, and we are hindered in our ability to prepare students to work in a diverse world if our campus itself is not diverse. We must tackle diversity issues holistically and intentionally to attain the change in culture necessary to support our students. Piecemeal fixes within any one of the areas above will not be sufficient to create a culture shift.

On many campuses across the country, including UNI, students are telling us that they do not feel accepted, comfortable, and fully supported by their universities. As at many other campuses, at UNI students are currently taking the lead in crafting solutions. We commend those students for their leadership. But it is telling that students have felt the need to do this. Cohorts of students come and go, but faculty and staff are the constant on college campuses. Many faculty and staff members have been working on these issues for years, but these efforts have not been as intentional, systematic, or effectively coordinated as they need to be. We can do better, but to do so we need to achieve a broad-based change in culture at UNI, led by faculty and staff committing the university to key areas of improvement.

## **QIP Diversity Proposal Subcommittee**

Kerri Clopton, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations

Glenn Gray, Assistant Vice President and Executive Director of Residence

Annette Lynch, Professor and Department Head, School of Applied Human Sciences

Scott Peters, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

Nicholas Rafanello, Director of Residence Life

Jeff Stokes, Professor, Department of Finance

Lori VanHooreweghe, Academic Advisor, Academic Learning Center

Isabela Varela, Assistant Director for Career Readiness / Employability, Career Services

Leslie Williams, Dean of Students

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<sup>2</sup> Roughly one in five Iowans under 18 is non-white and/or Hispanic. See [https://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/LSA/SC\\_MaterialsDist/2013/SDJPP010.PDF](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/LSA/SC_MaterialsDist/2013/SDJPP010.PDF).