

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 28, 2005

TO: The Diversity Disappearing Task Force

FROM: Thomas L. Purce, President

SUBJECT: Charge to Diversity Disappearing Task Force

"Because learning is enhanced when topics are examined from the perspectives of diverse groups and because such differences reflect the world around us, the college strives to create a rich mix in the composition of its student body, staff, and faculty, and to give serious consideration to issues of social class, age, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, gender, religious preference, and sexual orientation." — From the College's Mission Statement

Introduction

Evergreen has a long-standing commitment to valuing diversity. This commitment is reflected in the college's mission statement, the five foci, our strategic plan, and our annual goals. The college has worked to ensure that this commitment is reflected in our approach to all of the college's practices, including student recruitment and support, staff and faculty recruitment, and our teaching practices.

Our Work

As I charge the Diversity Disappearing Task Force (DTF), I want to acknowledge the work that is going on and the work that has been accomplished already. There are few institutions that can demonstrate a similar record of intense engagement with diversity and racism. We can all be proud of the steps Evergreen has taken, even as we acknowledge that more work remains.

Over the past two years, the college's commitment to diversity has been evident in much of the work we have done. Staff and faculty across campus have made contributions as part of their daily work. As part of our annual reviews, I have talked with each of the vice presidents about work in their divisions. Human Resources has arranged training to help staff learn to work with diverse populations. Academics continues to make diversity work a central part of the curriculum. This summer, each of the team planning institutes included a section devoted to diversity work.

Our work on diversity gained some additional energy and focus from the Day of Absence/Day of Presence program in 2003. A panel of student speakers helped make clear some specific classroom issues that students face. A second panel highlighted the experience of faculty teaching and interacting with diversity in the classroom. That summer, a faculty institute convened to examine these issues. The institute produced a list of issues and projects, and led to some grass roots work. Some of the projects identified by the institute's participants have been carried out, and some remain to be addressed. The work of the 2003 summer institute led directly to the development of summer institutes in 2004. These included an in-depth examination of race and cultural identity and practical help for faculty facilitating difficult discussions in the classroom. This fall we hosted a well-attended speakers series focused on race in the classroom. We have continued our work on Critical Moments,

and the Washington Center convened teams from institutions throughout the state for planning retreats focused on campus equity.

Three challenges

Much of our work over the past few years has focused on the racial climate in the classroom. This focus has been appropriate. It reflects the centrality of the classroom experience in the life of the college and it reflects the animating impact of race, both historically and currently, in any dialogue about diversity. As our work moves forward, it is important that we give due consideration to the full range of diversity issues reflected in our mission statement. It is also important that we give attention to the climate experienced by staff and faculty as well as students. As I reflect on our work so far, I want the advice of a Disappearing Task Force to address three challenges.

- *Sustaining our efforts.* Real improvements in campus climate require deep understanding and sustained effort. Over the past few years, we have maintained an intense focus on a critical campus issue - the racial climate in the classroom. Much of what we have accomplished has been due to the efforts of committed individuals who, sooner or later, will want to move on to other projects, retire, or just take a break. It is important that Evergreen, as an institution, be prepared to carry on this work. We need a plan that will help us institutionalize positive changes and help ensure that we carry on this work in the years ahead.
- *Coordinating and planning our efforts.* Much of our recent work has reflected a de-centralized, grass roots approach that has demonstrated broad support and commitment to improving our campus practices. We need to ensure that our limited resources are applied where they are most needed, that our efforts are not needlessly duplicated, and that our efforts are coordinated in a way that can lead to lasting institutional improvements. It is also important that the roles of the offices and individuals who are doing this work are clear to all.
- *Gaining a broader, deeper view of the college.* In the long run, our ability to become the college that we aspire to be depends on achieving a clear and comprehensive view of both our strengths and shortcomings. Our goals must be to ensure that, as our work continues, our efforts address the full complexity of diversity and college systems. There is a risk that the very intensity of our focus in one area may prevent us from recognizing another area in greater need of attention.

The charge

I am asking the DTF to advise me on how best to address these challenges. Specifically, I am asking the DTF to propose a **five-year diversity strategic plan** that addresses the following points.

1. The plan should identify specific priorities and goals, and describe actions that could be taken to achieve those goals. To produce a good five-year plan, the DTF will need to become familiar with our current work in support of diversity, including human resource practices, campus life programs, curricular strategies and other programs. The DTF will need to research data on the current state of the college and become familiar with the practices, programs and trends at other institutions.
2. The plan should propose a data collection framework that we can use regularly to develop a more complete and accurate assessment of the college's diversity efforts. A number of possible frameworks are available, some developed at Evergreen and others representing state-wide and national efforts.

3. The plan should consider what kind of implementation team would be necessary to coordinate and carry out the activities described in the strategic diversity plan.
4. Finally, the DTF's report should estimate any additional resources that would be required to carry out the plan.

Membership

I am grateful to Laura Grabhorn for agreeing to chair this effort and to Jan Sharkey for providing administrative support. In addition, a thank-you to the following faculty and staff for agreeing to serve on the DTF: Gaylon Finley, Paul Gallegos, Ken Holstein, Heesoon Jun, Gillies Malnarich, Tom Mercado, Alan Parker, Michael Pfeifer, Rita Pougiales, Joyce Stahmer, Joe Tougas, Jo Vaughn, Sonja Wiedenhaupt, Artee Young, and Julia Zay. Finally, I am in the process of appointing student members to the DTF.

Process and Timeline

The DTF should convene one or two meetings in Spring quarter to discuss this charge, develop a work plan, and identify the data that the DTF will want to initially review. As part of its work plan, the DTF should consider scheduling an extended meeting over the summer. I will provide salary support for members of the DTF who are not on contract to participate in a summer meeting. This preliminary work in the spring and summer should allow the DTF to get a quick start in the fall, to share a preliminary draft of its recommendations with the campus community during Winter quarter, and provide a final report to me early in Spring quarter 2006. I will then be able to provide a response to the DTF's recommendations by the end of the 2005-2006 academic year.