Some Best Practices in Establishing and Maintaining a Diverse Workforce

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Best Practices in Diversity Strategic Planning Workshop
April 4, 2006
The Silver Bullet

• Looking for the proverbial silver bullet is like searching for unicorns

• The road to establishing a diverse workforce demands *commitment*
Hard Work

• Your *actual* commitment is demonstrated by hard work and extra effort

• As you will see, all of the best practices require extra effort
Advertising

• Think of your vacancy as an *opportunity*
• Don’t just pull out the same announcement you used last time you had the vacancy
• Do the hard work: think about the position in light of:
  - Framework to Foster Diversity
  - Affirmative Action Goals
  - Mission Statement
  - Future direction of the unit
Make the Announcement a “Statement”

• Marketing 101: *Demonstrate* Penn State and unit commitment to diversity
• Use alternative sources for posting
• Cover Letters?
Passive v. Active

• Advertising a position is required, and it can be creative, but it is passive

• Remember! You are not the only employer competing for diverse applicants
Recruit - - Aggressively

• This is where the real work begins and the commitment is fully demonstrated

• **Network!!!**
  – Phone
  – Conferences
  – Set contact goals
  – Personal follow up: letters, calls, emails
  – Business cards
Don’t take NO* for an Answer

• Always keep in mind that recruiting is an on-going process—building relationships now pays dividends later

*(At least not the first one or two)
Search Committees

• Use them!
• Charge them!
• Train them!
• Ensure that your search committee has diverse representation
• If necessary, go outside the unit
• Committee members are also recruiters
Avoid Unintentional Cognitive Errors When Screening

• Elitism
• Gaps in record
• Raising the bar
• Assumptions
• The higher education trap
• The objectivity myth
• The meritocracy myth
  – Consider potential
The Color (Gender) Blind Bind

• Legally race or gender can never be the factor: When the unit is underrepresented, race or gender can be a factor
  – Race and gender can be used to ensure diverse short list
  – When underrepresented, race and gender can be used to break ties between two otherwise equally well qualified candidates (at the short list phase, at the selection phase)
Interviews

• Always ask a behaviorally based question regarding diversity

• Offer the candidate the opportunity to meet privately with faculty or staff of color or women

• Maintain an environment that visually demonstrates your commitment to diversity
Retention

• The color (gender) blind bind (again)
• Plan for change in the department culture and practices
• Protect new hires from excessive service assignments
• Identify and address signals by existing employees of their discomfort working with new hires whom they see as different than themselves
• Address critical incidents promptly
• Develop some simple guidelines when addressing problems with new hires
Development

• Develop (and reward) an instrumental mentoring program within the unit
• Help new hires make relevant connections outside the unit
• Identify leadership roles for new hires
• Ensure that new hires are afforded professional development opportunities
Culture Shift

Behind all of the concrete best practices must be a larger conceptual realization that universities, like the social and economic sectors upon which they are built, are still structured to favor the success of the dominant majority—particularly the presumption of competence