

Introduction

Capital University's history includes a demonstrated commitment toward building a diverse university. The Fall, 2005 university enrollment included 16% domestic racial and ethnic diversity and 2% international diversity. Programs have been established to support and retain a diverse student population, provide educational and awareness programs and events, provide opportunities for study abroad and within urban settings, and assess the campus climate to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment.

In Fall of 2002, President Theodore Fredrickson issued, and the Board of Trustees approved, a university strategic plan which included goals to create a welcoming and supportive campus climate throughout the institution. Through divisional work plans and assessment activity, goals could be clearly evaluated.

The University Diversity Initiative Committee was established to provide leadership and support to institutional initiatives. To manage the charge, a committee structure was developed which identifies areas to address. A sub-committee was assigned to each area with the chairperson serving as a member of the executive committee. Sub-committee's established include:

- Recruitment/Retention: Faculty
- Recruitment/Retention: Staff
- Recruitment/Retention: Students
- Campus Climate: Campus Life
- Campus Climate: Academic Life
- Disability Services
- Adult Students

Short-term goals, attainable within an academic year, have been set by each subcommittee with the long term goal to develop a strategic plan. The entire university community was invited over a two-year period to discuss a draft diversity statement and discussion guide. Comments were solicited to develop a shared understanding of diversity and the role and value of diversity within the Capital University community. The following "value statement" was developed based upon feedback from the dialogues.

Value Statement

Transforming lives through higher education.

By drawing upon the Lutheran principle of free inquiry, Capital University:

- *Provides for personal growth by encouraging, enabling, and celebrating learning;*
- *Prepares individuals to be knowledgeable, independent, critical thinkers - educated for lives of leadership and service in an increasingly diverse society;*
- *Inspires individuals to be morally reflective, spiritually alive, and civically engaged.*

Capital University Mission Statement

As we work toward achieving the university mission, shared understandings of institutional values, goals and diversity shape our vision of a multicultural community and learning environment at Capital University. Diversity initiatives improve students' relationships on campus and affect positively their satisfaction and involvement. Diverse learning environments contribute to developing knowledge, cultural interests, and interracial understanding as lifelong attributes. Other benefits are that a diverse learning environment (*On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education: An Open Letter*, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, "The Washington Post," 2/9/98):

- Enriches the educational experience
- Promotes personal growth - - and a healthy society
- Strengthens communities and the workplace
- Enhances America's economic competitiveness

For Capital University as an academic institution, diversity encompasses:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Class (family socio-economic and educational background)
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion (inclusive of atheism)
- Disabilities

As students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, friends of the university and the community at large, embrace the common mission of the university, an environment of respect and celebration of differences will foster genuine understanding. It is through this common commitment to certain shared values that community emerges.

Strategic Directions

The University Diversity Initiative Committee is charged with developing recommendations, activities, and programs to support the transition of the university toward an inclusive and diverse community for:

- Increasing racial diversity among faculty, staff and students;
- Retain diverse faculty, staff and students by identifying institutional barriers and providing support systems.
- Fostering a campus climate that values and respects diversity.
- Providing the campus community with learning experiences that confront the realities of our increasingly diverse society.

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