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Executive Summary

Since its formation in 2005, the Commission on the Status of Students, Staff and Faculty of Color has collected and analyzed relevant demographic data, researched current practices at other institutions, and designed and conducted focus groups and surveys. A number of themes have emerged that have led to the recommendations and conclusion reported here.

Students

While the diversity of the student body has increased substantially over the last 30 years, from 2.6% minorities in 1976 to 11.6% in 2006, the presence of students of color remains below levels that might be expected on the basis of minority presence in the state and national population.

Data for the last ten years also shows that retention and graduation rates for minority students fall below those for majority students. Since 1996, on average, retention rates for students of color lag behind those of white students after the first and second years at the University by 1.2% and 4.4% respectively. Similarly, on average, four, five and six year graduation rates for students of color lag behind those of white students by 17.1%, 15% and 11.7% respectively. It is important to note that the differences in graduation rates between students of color and white students have increased considerably since 1996. The difference in the four year graduation rate has increased from 9.6% in 1996 to 26.3% for the 2002 cohort. The five and six year graduation rate differences have increased from 9.6% to 18.5%, and from 8.9% to 12.2% respectively.

Information gained in focus groups made up of students both on the Kingston campus and at the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Continuing Education indicates that students of color feel an isolation resulting from the absence of mechanisms that would promote student to student, student to staff and student to faculty networking. Students cite the absence of orientation programs that would prepare them to deal with the particular issues faced by students of color on a majority campus. One inference that may be drawn from the retention and graduation data is that the absence of programming specifically aimed at meeting the academic, social and perhaps financial needs of students of color has a negative effect on persistence and the completion of degree requirements.

Staff

Available demographic data taken at five year intervals shows that between 1976 and 2005 the percentage of minority staff increased from 5.2% of the University staff in 1976 to a peak of 12.2% in 1990, and subsequently decreased to 8.4% in 2005. While the percentage of staff of color has rebounded from 0% in 1995 to 6.5% in 2005 for those in technical and paraprofessional categories, the percentage of minorities in the service and maintenance areas has dropped from 14.5% in 1985 to 8.6% in 2005. One is clearly left to wonder whether the available pools from which staff are drawn have changed substantially over the past 15 years or whether targeted recruitment and hiring of minority staff has not taken place in an aggressive fashion during this period.
Comments from staff focus groups gave the impression of people resigned to neglect. There was little to no feeling of belonging, and the campus was seen as an isolating environment for staff of color. Because of the distribution of the small number of staff in various units around the University, there is no sense of community. Although helpful to students when occasions permitted, staff members found no formal means for interaction with students, faculty or other members of the staff. There was agreement that real progress must be measured by increases in the number of staff of color at the University and that questions regarding the small numbers of staff need to be addressed. The themes that emerged from the focus groups were that “more folk are needed,” that the University presents an indifferent or neutral climate for people of color, and that no one is responsible for a remedy. One participant stated that the general response to these conditions is to “suffer in silence.”

**Faculty**

The University has shown a progressive increase in the number of minority faculty members since 1976 with increases in the number of African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American faculty members. Numerical increases have been greatest for Asian faculty members with a 2005 total of 63. The number of African American faculty members has increased from six in 1976 to 26 in 2005, and the number Hispanic faculty members has grown from four in 1976 to 14 in 2005. The number of Native American faculty members has shown the greatest percentage increase during this period, but the absolute numbers are quite small, and have changed from one in 1976 to five in 2005. While these changes provide a trend line that is promising, state and national demographic data indicate that faculty of color remain under-represented, and greater effort is needed to continue to move these numbers in a positive direction. The overall increases shown by these numbers also mask the loss of well-respected faculty members of color who have been lured away from the University. University admissions people often say that it is less expensive to retain a student than to recruit a replacement. The same is true for faculty members, particularly faculty members of color.

Results from focus groups and the survey of faculty members of color describe a University climate that, while initially welcoming, does not support sustained interest in the welfare of faculty members of color. Comments made by both students and staff were echoed by faculty members who found no established affinity group, no formal effort to orient new faculty members to the campus climate prior to arrival and an isolating environment. Faculty members cited the absence of any effort to facilitate entrée to communities of color either locally or statewide. There is also the perception that faculty of color do not receive quite the same level of academic and professional support and guidance as that enjoyed by their majority colleagues. Faculty of color point to the absence of understanding on the part of many of their Chairs and Deans of the additional expectations regarding advising, committee work, and campus and community outreach that come with being a faculty member of color. Several faculty members pointed out the absence of people of color at higher administrative levels, and thus an absence of focus on issues that affect their success.

While units such as the Affirmative Action Office, the Multicultural Center, Special Programs for Talent Development, along with a number of student organizations and various academic
support programs are evidence of the University’s commitment to diversity, these often lack coordination of effort, and therefore possibilities for efficiency and synergy among them is lost. Furthermore, because there is no identifiable person or office that has the responsibility for addressing these issues, matters that deserve attention do not gain the visibility necessary to generate the actions required for resolution. In short, there is no single office reporting to the President that has the responsibility for oversight, coordination and advocacy of programs that promote diversity and inclusion.

Information and views gained by the Commission point to the need for an integrated array of coordinated efforts under the supervision of a University official, a Chief Diversity Officer, who reports directly to the President, who has oversight responsibility and authority for cultural programming that includes faculty, staff and students, and who is charged with promoting and effecting hiring practices that increase the number of staff and faculty of color. This same officer would be responsible for developing strategies to increase the recruitment of students of color and would advise Enrollment Management on the implementation of these strategies. As pointed out by Damon A. Williams, Senior Diversity Officer at the University of Connecticut, this person must have more than symbolic authority, and “must also have human, financial and technical resources that allow them to collaboratively engage the campus community in the diversity change process.”
Introduction

Creation of the Commission

The President’s Commission on the Status of Students, Staff and Faculty of Color at the University of Rhode Island was created in 2005 to examine the current status of people of color at the University and to develop recommendations designed to promote the development of an environment conducive to the full inclusion and development of students, staff and faculty of color.

In order to accomplish its mission, the Commission collected and analyzed relevant demographic data, reviewed existing policies and programs, conducted focus groups, developed surveys, researched higher education best practices in the areas of recruitment, retention and support of faculty, staff and students of color. An interim report was developed and presented to University President Robert L. Carothers on ________________, and an Executive Summary was present to the President on June 15, 2007. The current document presents a more complete account of the findings and recommendations of the Commission.

Commission Members

Harold Bibb, Chairperson
Abu Bakr, Facilitator
Hilary Jones, Graduate Assistant

Donald Cunnigen - Faculty
Harry Davis – Staff
Paul DeMesquita – Faculty
Gail Faris – Staff
Donna Gilton – Faculty
Roxanne Gomes – Staff
Marta Gomez-Chiarri – Faculty
Mailee Kue – Staff
Cleveland Kurtz – Staff
Domingo Morel – Staff
Roxanne Murray – Staff
William Ohley – Faculty
Sylvia Spears – Faculty
Mercedes Rivero-Hudic – Faculty
Minsuk Shim – Faculty
Paula Valliere – Staff
Sze Yang - Faculty
Cheryl Wilga - Faculty

Student Representatives from:

• Uhuru SaSa
• LASA
• CVSA
• ASA

4 December Draft
Historical Demographic Data

Faculty & Staff

The inclusion of under-represented ethnic minorities in the University workforce has shown a considerable increase over the past 30 years, but remains below the percentage of minorities in the population of the state of Rhode Island and in the U.S. In 1976, ethnic minorities accounted for only 5% of the total workforce. In 2005, ethnic minorities constituted 10.4% of the total workforce. This increase in diversity has been greatest within the faculty. The representation of minority faculty has more than tripled from 4.7% in 1976 to 15.2% in 2005 (See Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Ethnic Minority</th>
<th>%White</th>
<th>Total Faculty &amp; Staff</th>
<th>% Ethnic Minority</th>
<th>Total Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
<td>2219</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>2548</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
<td>2420</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
<td>2625</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>2364</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>2450</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
<td>2471</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>712</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between 1976 and 2005, the total number of minority faculty and staff grew from 112 to 256, representing an increase of 144 or 129%. The greatest percentage increase by far is in the number of Asian and Hispanic faculty and staff. Asian faculty and staff grew steadily from 27 in 1976 to 101 in 2005, representing an increase of 74 or 274%, while the number of Hispanic faculty and staff increased from 10 to 38 for an increase of 28 or 280% during the same period of time. The number of African American faculty and staff increased from 59 to 84 for a 42% increase during this period. However, the number of African American faculty and staff reached a peak number of 90 in 1981, and decreased through the year 2000. Although there has been some rebound since 2000, the numbers for 2005 still had not returned to the 1981 level. During this same period the overall number of Native Americans grew from 16 to 33 for a 106% increase, but reached a peak of 46 in 1990 and have since decreased to 33 (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Total Minorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>214</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 December Draft
In reviewing the number of minorities holding staff positions, it can be seen that there has been an increase from 81 in 1976 to 148 in 2005 for an increase of 83% (Table 3). However, during this 30 year period, increases in numbers have varied among ethnic minorities. The number of Hispanic staff members has risen from 6 to a total of 24 for a 300% increase, while the number of Asian staff members has grown from 7 to 38 for a 443% increase. While showing overall growth from 15 to 28 during this period for an 87% increase, the number of Native American staff members reached a peak of 44 in 1990 and since has decreased to 28. Similarly, the number of African American staff members shows an overall increase from 53 in 1976 to 58 in 2005 for an increase of 9.4% after reaching a peak of 84 in 1981, but declined to 58 in 2005.

TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Total Minorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>122</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Job Group Analysis Data 1976-2005* *URI Office of Information Services/Institutional Research*

The inclusion of minorities in the overall workforce of the University shows a clear increase between 1976 and 2005 (see Table 4). However, these increases have not been uniformly spread over all job categories. While most non-faculty categories show an increase in the percentage of minorities and range from an increase of percentage points at the Executive/Administrative category to an increase of 4.2 percentage point is the Clerical category, inclusion in the Technical/Para-professional and the Service/Maintenance categories has remained essentially flat or slightly negative.

TABLE 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Executive/Administrative</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Professional Non-Faculty</th>
<th>Clerical</th>
<th>Technical/Para-professional</th>
<th>Skilled Crafts</th>
<th>Service/Maintenance</th>
<th>Total Minority Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Job Group Analysis Data 1976-2005* *URI Office of Information Services/Institutional Research*

4 December Draft
Among the various job categories, that of the faculty has clearly shown the greatest increase in inclusion. In 1976 there were only 31 minority faculty members, comprising 4.5% of the total faculty, and in 2005 there were 108 minority faculty members or 15.2% of the total faculty (Table 4 and Table 5). While there have been numerical increases in the number of faculty members from each of the minority groups between 1976 and 2005, the greatest numerical increase has been among Asian faculty members (from 20 to 63), followed in order by African Americans (from 6 to 26), Hispanics (from 4 to 14) and Native Americans (from 1 to 4).

**TABLE 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Total Minorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Job Group Analysis Data 1976-2005" URI Office of Information Services/Institutional Research

Taken together, this data indicates that minorities on this campus account for a little over 10% of the workforce, in a state where minorities account for 17% of the total population (RI Census 2000). Currently, demographic data for the university’s population of students, faculty and staff is categorized into African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Caucasian, and not reported. If we compare these same categories from demographic data for the last RI Census (2000) the figure is 15%. However, census data also reveals an additional 2% of the state population in the demographic category of “multiracial” (2 or more races), a category that the university does not currently provide.

**Students**

Diversity among the student body at the university also has increased steadily since 1976 (Table 6). In 2005, minority students represented 10.8% of the total student population compared to 2.6% in 1976. The most significant increase occurred during the 10-year period from 1985 – 1995 when the percentage of students of color increased from 3.7% to 8.1%. Although students of color comprised approximately 11% of the total student body, only 75% of the student body self-reported as white. Approximately, 14% of the student body did not report a racial identification. If a significant number of these students are biracial or multiracial and did not feel comfortable with the narrow racial definitions provided the student body may be more diverse than is reported.
TABLE 6
Demographic Make-up of Entire Student Body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African American #</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Hispanic #</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Asian #</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Native American #</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total Minorities %</th>
<th>White %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>.2%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>.2%</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.2%</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>1108</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>1542</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>1635</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Enrollment by Ethnicity from 1976* URI Office of Information Services/Institutional Research

The number of first time freshmen students entering the university has also been on the rise. In 2006, there were 895 more first time freshmen than just 10 years prior in 1996. Similarly, the number of minority first time freshmen is also on the rise. There were 190 more students of color in the entering class of 2006 than in that of 1996 (See Table 7). The total percent of students of color in 1996 was 9.8%. This percentage increased to 13.5%, which represents an increase of 3.7% overall. However, this increase does not keep pace with the percentage increase (4.7%) of first time freshmen entering the university during this time period.

African American first time freshmen increased slightly (1.6%) during this time period. Hispanic students showed the greatest increase (2.4%) among students of color, while the entry of first time freshmen Native American students remained relatively flat. In fact, the total number of Native American students has not increased since 1976. The percentage of first time freshman Asian students increase to their highest levels between 1998 and 2000 and have declined significantly since 2000.

TABLE 7
Demographic Make-up of First Time Freshmen Students since 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African American #</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Hispanic #</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Asian #</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Native American #</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total Minorities %</th>
<th>White %</th>
<th>Total 1st Time Freshmen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Enrollment by Ethnicity from 1976* URI Office of Information Services/Institutional Research

However, the numbers for minority representation on campus continue to be low as a percentage of total students. In spite of the fact that minority populations continue to graduate from high school and plan to pursue higher education careers at higher rates, there is some information that suggests that more students chose not to attend the university because of financial constraints (Vargas, 2006).
Persistence and Graduation

Significant numbers of minority students who attend the university stop out after the first or second year because they are unable to keep up with the difficult mix of financial and academic demands of a college education (Vargas, 2006). This reality tends to take a higher toll on minority and non-traditional students, who often have risk factors present such as; low-income, delayed entrance to higher education, family or dependent responsibilities, and working full-time while enrolled (Corrigan, 2003). Although percentages fluctuate from year to year, the table below shows that overall, minority students at the university tend to have lower rates of retention than the majority student population (Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>All Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>79.0%</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Retention Rates for First Time Freshmen 1st and 2nd Years* URI Office of Information Services/Institutional Research (Information obtained from publications by URI Office of Information Services/Institutional Research)

These retention and persistence levels continue to decrease annually. In the 1996 first time freshmen incoming class, there were 184 students of color. Of these students, 24% graduated in 4 years or less, 44, 20% graduated in 5 years or less, and 48% graduated in 6 years or less. The comparable 6-year graduation rate for the non-minority students in the same incoming class was 57% (See Chart A). Although some fluctuations have occurred for the 1996-2000 freshmen cohorts, the 6 year graduation rates for students of color have decreased by 1.5%, while the 6 year graduation rate has increased by almost 2 percent.
Institutional factors also play a key role in student retention and persistence. The provision of academic and social support as well as opportunities for effective academic advising and mentoring are essential components of a successful collegiate environment (Swail, 2003).

Resources Devoted to Increasing Inclusion of Students, Staff and Faculty of Color

The university currently has numerous programs, policies, and resources in place devoted to promoting diversity and inclusion among faculty, staff, and students throughout its campus. Below is a list of the current resources available along with a short description of their basic mission, purpose, and/or function.

Programs & Resources

Talent Development - The Special Programs for Talent Development (TD) was created in 1968 in response to the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The mission of TD is to recruit, support, and retain in-state students who are not eligible to enter the University through the standard admissions process. TD operates on the assumption that many students who do not have the standard academic performance measures, such as grade point average or standardized tests scores, but who possess the aptitude and interest in pursuing post-secondary education can succeed if provided a set of specially designed academic programs and supports. In keeping with Dr. King’s dream, TD’s mission is to ensure that deserving people, however excluded by inadequate elementary and secondary education, historic oppression and life experiences, be provided an equal opportunity to pursue higher education and thus their life’s goals. Students are recruited from high schools, as well as community and faith based agencies across the state. Students accepted to the TD Program participate in a 5 week Pre-Matriculation Program during the summer prior to their initial fall semester to enhance their academic skill as well as enroll in and complete two summer courses (6 credits). The students’ ultimate admission to the University as a fully matriculated students is on condition that they successfully complete the 6 credits with
a C average. Students are provided tutorial assistance throughout the summer pre-matriculation experiences as well during the tenure at the University until graduation.

**Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies** - The mission of the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island is to help build a world of mutual understanding among people, in which nonviolent processes are used to reconcile conflicts and build community. The Center seeks to study and apply approaches which will foster more harmonious relationships at every level. The Center will accomplish this mission by providing educational and research opportunities, and leadership development at the University of Rhode Island, and help facilitate such programs throughout the state. In addition, the Center will provide help to initiate similar programs nationally and internationally. The Center collaborates with other organizations doing peace-building work locally, nation-wide, and globally.

**Women’s Center** - The URI Women's Center provides the necessary resources to help create an educational and work environment rich in visible role models and free of sexual bias and inequities. The Women's Center strives to assist all university women to grow to their full potential by developing their voices and by showcasing their talents. The center houses numerous programs including the Violence Prevention and Advocacy Services, Rose Butler Browne Mentoring and Leadership Program for women of color, the Women in Science and Technology Program living/learning community (WIST) and Independent Student Services.

**Multicultural Center** - The URI Multicultural Center (MCC) is a place dedicated to developing a supportive and inclusive campus culture across the boundaries of culture, identity, and discipline. Celebrating unity in diversity, the Multicultural Center invites all of its students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and other friends to join in its work in creating a community of learners within and beyond URI.

The URI Multicultural Center envisions itself as a catalyst committed to the development and dissemination of cutting edge knowledge and practice for a University in which students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other diverse learners equip themselves with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to transform the campus on which they study and the world in which they live into culturally competent and inclusive learning communities in which difference is perceived as a resource, rather than a threat; and in which social equity, information, and freedom of choice are accessible to all.

The Multicultural Center is also home to many culturally based student organizations including:

- **Alima International Dance Association (AIDA)** – AIDA considers itself a family whose goal is to spread the diversity of dancing that derived from the African roots.

- **Asian Students Association (ASA)** - ASA’s goal is to promote better understanding of Asian countries and cultures to the URI community and to a bigger scope.

- **Black American Society***

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Brazilian Cape Verdean (BCV) Capoeira – BCV promotes the principles of respect, self-control, discipline, integrity and trust through the art form known as Capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian martial art mixed with music and acrobatics) while advancing the level of education about respect for the Brazilian and Cape Verdean culture.

Dreams of Diversity through Dance (D3) – D3 introduces its members and the University of Rhode Island's Community to the richness of cultures through dance. Their mission is to spread the knowledge of one another's culture and traditions through the universal language of the arts.

Lambda Upsilon Lambda - The Lambda Upsilon Lambda mission statement is to provide Latino Students with the academic, cultural and social support necessary to excel in institutions of higher learning

Latin American Students Association (LASA) - LASA's goal is to create a center of orientation to help students confront and surpass the frustrations they may encounter when initially exposed to a socio-economic educational system unknown to its members. It hopes to identity and reinforce culture, language and custom among Latin students, and to enhance educational, social and cultural opportunities in the university of Rhode Island community.

Muslim Students Association (MSA) - The Muslim Students Association's objective is to promote understanding and cooperation between the Muslim community and other communities to find solutions to various ethical and moral dilemmas faced by our society.

National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) - NSBE's mission is to increase the number of culturally responsible Black engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community.

Pink*

Sigma Lamda Upsilon - The Sigma Lamda Upsilon chapter of URI promotes understanding of Latina cultures and issues and collaboration with other organizations. Also known as Senoritas Latinas Unidas, the organization encourages the ideals of sisterhood, leadership, service, academic excellence, and cultural enrichment.

Society of Hispanic Engineers (SHPE)

Society of Women Engineers (SWE) - The Society of Women Engineers is committed to supporting women and diversity in engineering. The organization motivates women to achieve full potential in careers as engineers and leaders, while expanding the image of the engineering profession as a positive force in improving the quality of life.

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Teatro Latino Estudiantil "La Casa" - Its goal is to help young Hispanics maintain their languages and cultural heritage, while working to integrate themselves into the wider community.

Uhuru Sasa (SASA) - Uhuru SaSa denotes "Freedom Now." SASA's purpose is dedicated to establishing and maintaining the cultural, social and educational enrichment of all people who work and study at the University and community.

Intercultural Community for Academic Success (ICAS) - The Intercultural Community for Academic Success is a program within the university’s Academic Enhancement Center. Their mission is to enable the AEC to increase its ability to support the academic growth and development of students from under-represented racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

Advance Project - The ADVANCE project at the University of Rhode Island is a 5-year program funded by the National Science Foundation designed to improve and enrich the scientific, technology, engineering, and mathematic academic workforce at URI through the increased representation and participation of women faculty. URI ADVANCE is involved in recruitment efforts, faculty development, improving networks of support, and overall climate change, to the ultimate benefit of all faculty at the University of Rhode Island.

Learning Enhancement for Adults Program (LEAP) - LEAP is a semester long scholarship program for minorities and other adults designed to help adult students build confidence and polish their skills in reading and writing. The program began in 1988 through the combined efforts of the CCE Minority Outreach Committee, the Office of Student Services, and the Office of Academic Programs. Initial funding was made possible by the efforts of the members of the Black Caucus of State Legislators. The program’s primary funding continues to come from the legislative grant. LEAP enrolls approximately 30 students each semester, 15 each in daytime and evening programs. The program has modules enabling students to learn to use the library, develop computing skills, learn study skills and time management. The program offers academic support, counseling, peer mentoring, tutoring and assistance in applying for financial aid.

President’s Commission on the Status of Women - The mission of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women is to promote an environment free of gender-based discrimination in which the unique contributions of all will flourish by developing alliances and collaborating with the existing organizations and structures within the University communities. The following are its primary goals:

1. Ensure that personal safety for women is preeminent with an emphasis on prevention through educational programs for the University community.
2. Intensify efforts to recruit and retain women of color in all sectors of the institution.
3. Ensure that sexual harassment is addressed through increased emphasis on prevention, reporting, and effective disciplinary measures. [In collaboration with the Harassment Subcommittee of the URI Affirmative Action Equal Opportunity Committee.]
4. Address issues of tenure, retention, and promotion of women to bring their numbers more in line with those of their male counterparts.

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5. Provide an adequate Women’s Center as the single best source of information, education, and advocacy in matters of concern to women.
6. Address the issue of needed enhancement of family leave and childcare.
7. Address other issues as shall be deemed timely and necessary.

Graduate Student Support and Mentoring Programs

**The Northeast Alliance for Graduate Education for the Professoriate (NEAGEP)**
The University of Rhode Island joins with other Universities throughout the Northeast in a program designed to recruit, retain, mentor and provide professional development opportunities for students of color who are pursuing graduate degrees in the STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). The effort is funded through the National Science Foundation (NSF), and supports the position of Coordinator of Graduate Diversity Affairs along with a lecture series on professional development for graduate students of color and a variety of recruitment and retention activities.

**URI Foundation/Graduate School Minority Fellowships** - The URI Foundation and the Graduate School jointly fund three fellowships each year that provide tuition and fees and a stipend for students from groups that are currently under-represented in higher education (re-write to mention specifically Native American, Hispanic and African American graduate students). Departments must nominate students for these awards.

**New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE)**
URI participates in NEBHE’s Minority Doctoral Scholars program that is run through NEBHE’s Excellence through Diversity Program. The goal of the Doctoral Scholars program is to increase the number of faculty members from groups currently under-represented in higher education (Native Americans, Hispanics and African Americans) in the STEM disciplines. The program grants fellowships that provide a stipend and the payment of tuition and fees. Additionally the program supports travel to scientific, mentoring and networking meetings, and promotes best practices in mentoring.

**The Sloan Foundation Minority Ph.D. Program** - The University of Rhode Island has been designated as a Sloan Campus, and through its fellowship program the Sloan Foundation provides a stipend along with tuition and fee support for Native American, Hispanic and African American Ph.D. students in STEM disciplines. The program promotes best practices in mentoring, and supports student travel to national mentoring and networking meetings.

**The Institute for the Recruitment of Teachers (IRT)** - The University of Rhode Island is a charter member of a consortium of more than 40 universities that supports the Institute for the Recruitment of Teachers. The IRT is located at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts and works to increase the number of faculty members from under-represented groups at all levels of education. It sponsors a five-week summer workshop for rising fourth year students that prepares students for graduate study in the social sciences, the arts and the humanities. Thirty students are chosen for the workshop each summer from an applicant pool of approximately three hundred, and do extensive work in exploring various courses of study, preparing the
statement of purpose for applications to graduate schools, and in taking graduate level seminars on such topics as feminism, class and cultural studies. URI recruits IRT students and provides fellowship and assistantship support to those who enroll in graduate studies here.

**The Rose Butler Browne Leadership and Mentor Program** - The Rose Butler Browne Leadership and Mentor Program for Women of Color at the Women’s Center is a four-step program that creates a safe harbor for its participants while simultaneously promoting involvement in university life and preparation for career success. It is designed to assist in the adjustment, academic and social success, leadership development, campus participation, and career preparation. The program also hopes to address feelings of isolation and limited social satisfaction, as well as both subtle and overt discrimination on our predominantly white campus.

**The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP)** - The University of Rhode Island is part of a consortium of five universities in the northeast that is funded by NSF to generate and develop the interest of minority students in the STEM disciplines. While initially aimed at the recruitment of minority students into undergraduate programs, the recent renewal of funding for an additional five years includes the aim of encouraging minority students to pursue graduate studies in STEM areas.

**Policies**

**Discrimination Complaint Process #85-1**

These complaint procedures apply to complaints by members of the University community alleging that their rights under the University's Affirmative Action Plan or Sexual Harassment Policy have been violated. The University prohibits discrimination/harassment on the basis of race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, national origin, disability and sexual orientation. These procedures are also applicable to complaints which may arise under Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Higher Education Act; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; Sections 503/504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; Section 402 of the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974; the Equal Pay Act of 1963; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; Executive Order 11246, as amended; Executive Order 91-39; Executive Order 92-2; and Rhode Island General Law 28-5.1, as amended.

**Equal Opportunity University Policy**

"It is the policy of the University of Rhode Island not to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or discriminate against disabled and Vietnam era veterans in the recruitment, admission or treatment of students, the recruitment, hiring or treatment of faculty and staff, and in the operation of its activities and programs, as specified by State and Federal Laws, including the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Higher Education Act, Executive Order 11246, as amended, Sections 503/504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, Section 402 of the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment
The Assistance Act of 1974, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and all other laws which pertain to access and equity.

The University has other policies in place to ensure diversity and inclusion on its campus. This report, however, is focused more specifically on issues that affect students, staff and faculty of color.

**Evaluation of Effectiveness of Programs, Policies, and Resources**

**Focus Groups**

In an effort to understand the impressions and perceptions regarding the university, the commission carried out a series of focus groups involving students, faculty, and staff as separate groups. The topic areas and/or questions for each set of focus groups were created by each of the commission sub-committees, faculty, staff, and student. The focus group meetings proved to be insightful. The participants had many diverse perceptions of the university and its climate, as well as ideas of what can be done to improve the experiences of people of color and the campus environment as a whole.

**Students**

Two student focus groups aimed at understanding the perceptions and experiences of students at the university were held. One focus group involved graduate students at the Kingston Campus. This focus group was held in December of 2005 and involved the participation of 5 graduate students of color. The other was held with students at the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Continuing Education (CCE) in downtown Providence. This focus group was held in April of 2006 and involved the participation of 9 undergraduate students. The questions asked in both focus groups were very similar and looked to identify; the students’ pre-conceived impressions of the university prior to their arrival, their perception of the accuracy of those impressions shortly after arriving on campus, their social and academic experiences on campus, their experiences of the campus climate and overall (environment, thoughts about leaving the university, and, what the university can do to help graduate students be successful (See Appendices __ & __).

The two groups held some differences in their expectations of the university prior to their arrival. The Kingston students expected diversity and more support. Instead, they found isolation, lack of interest from professors, a lack of cultural competence among faculty and staff, as well as ambivalence from other students of color. The CCE students expected a primarily “White environment” and held some apprehension about feeling as though they would not belong. These students agreed that there is no open network to share information about the university. Some pointed out that they have witnessed derogatory comments made in class, and that some were obviously racist in nature. Concern was expressed over the lack of both a student orientation program and a network to assist students in their transition. In addition, CCE students pointed out that there are no social activities scheduled at CCE and they agreed that they would participate in activities on evenings or weekends if offered and family oriented.

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In terms of what the university can do to aid in their success, Kingston students noted the need for greater support from faculty, financial support, diversity, information about navigating through the university and its resources (“how to”, “where to find…”), family friendly programming, and, social events.

The CCE students verbalized the same types of needs in more specific ways. These students expressed a need in the CCE campus for; more outreach and an orientation program, eliminating the stigma of CCE campus, comprehensive counseling, developing a more comprehensive retention program, sensitizing and making more compassionate the offices with primary points of contact for students and the public, as well as, the reorganization of the information center, student services, and advising offices.

**Retention, Persistence, and Degree Attainment of Minority Students**

In 2006, Tammy Vargas, a graduate student in the College Student Personnel Program conducted a study for her Master’s Research project on retention, persistence, and degree attainment of minority students at URI. The study focused on examining the factors that contributed to the persistence and degree attainment, as well as, the discontinuation of academic careers within students of color. The participants for this study consisted of 56 students who graduated and 10 students who discontinued their studies from the university between 2003 and 2005.

The findings from this study highlighted social, financial, and, institutional factors to which students attributed their success or lack thereof. Among these factors, students specifically cited lack of diversity and lack of continuous and frequent academic advising as primary challenges during their enrollment at the university. The researcher also suggested three primary areas that the university must address in order to increase retention, persistence and degree attainment of its minority students. These three areas consisted of: Advising, Campus Diversity, and, Involvement. In regards to campus diversity, the researcher explains that this study found the lack of diversity on campus to be “clearly apparent” and “strongly felt by the students”. She goes on to report that in addition to having difficulty making friends in classes, minority students feel they have to “make an effort” to find other students they can relate to and as a result often feel isolated and marginalized. In addition, students also expressed the need for diversity within the faculty and staff. For the full contents of this study, see appendix --

**Staff**

Focus groups aimed at uncovering and understanding the experiences of staff members at the university were held separately with both former and current university staff. The focus group involving former staff was held in April of 2006 and involved the participation of 15 former staff members. A total of 17 staff members attended one of three focus groups scheduled during the month of April of 2006. A set of questions used for these focus groups was formulated by the Staff sub-committee. The questions focused on staff members’ pre-conceived impressions of the university prior to their arrival and the accuracy of those impressions shortly after arriving on campus, staff members’ experiences with; the climate and atmosphere, being promoted, acts of prejudice or discrimination, involvement in campus social events, as well as, what the university can do to support the success of staff of color.
The meeting with the former staff members provided insight in the form of a time-line discussion of the climate and the evolution of minority hiring at the university. Staff members expressed that, in 1952, it was understood that ‘blacks need not apply’. It was decades later that those of minority cultures had any chance of being hired, and then only with a letter from a legislator. During the 1980s, when some of these same folks were able to finally get employment, the sense of ‘belonging’ was short-lived. The new employee’s contact with other minority employees was lost. There was no ‘critical mass’ and therefore, any initiative for cultural contact lost steam. Additionally, in the early 1980s, minorities were afraid to speak out for fear of recriminations. Progressing to the 1990s, past employees felt that value to the University was not because of what one knew, but rather who one knew.

A number of themes emerged and were prevalent across all three of the focus groups with the current staff members. The themes produced were; “more folk needed”, “lacking a sense of community”, “indifferent or neutral climate”, and, “no one is responsible for remedy”.

More Folk Needed
One employee, who began here as a graduate student, was told by a friend, “Please come, because to have friends of color here, you have to bring them.” Every group emphasized that they needed to see more people like themselves on campus.

If we look around now, there are no middle level management minorities, though there are more at the entry level. In one building of 50, namely Health Services, there are 2 persons of color. In Admissions, minorities only interview for the one position that reads Talent Development applications. It is felt that real progress is in the numbers and we need to ask why there are so few. Participants felt that there has never been a real thrust to increase numbers or advocacy to recruit or employ people of color. The bar needs to be raised; accountability should not be considered a stumbling block.

“Lack of staff folk” has a spill-over effect with students. If students don’t see minority staff on campus, they will not like it and they will not persist. One professional stated that it is the minority students who seek her out for services.

Lacking a Sense of Community
This second theme is also prevalent and it interfaces with the first theme of “more folk needed”. Some thought that they would have a family on campus with other minorities, but after years of work and working at it, it remains unachieved. Though there are attempts for this unity, it fizzles because there is not enough momentum or critical mass to hold it together.

A common sentiment is that folks of color will say “I don’t know who is here. I just drive home after work”. They say that they don’t celebrate here at the University. Their job is here, and in great part they like their jobs, but their interests are off-campus. When they leave for the day, they do not want to come back in the same day. They experience a rich life away from campus with family and friends. One person stated, “There is a delineation…job, career, life. The University is a job for me. I am not willing to vest my ‘life’ in the University.”
Indifferent or Neutral Climate

Many participants described the ‘climate’ at the University as both neutral and indifferent. The impact of the meaning of these words confronted the committee when one participant described the feeling as ‘a suffering in silence’. This treatment is not overt prejudice or discrimination, but rather of a consistent, level, and subtle variety that has the effect or reducing a person’s sense of meaning and sense of inclusion. The subtlety often produces an inability to articulate the experience.

In stating what they observed, staff arrived at one solution of their own: people dealing with students should like students. Staff and faculty should be sensitive and know the culture of students: if their eyes are down or their hats are to the side, this may mean something culturally. Students are already scared; when they are treated badly they feel more scared and stupid.

No One is Responsible for Remedy

The argument that no one is watching the store hit home in a discussion about the interaction between Human Resource Administration and Affirmative Action. The stated fact that HR and AA ‘don’t get along together’ is often used as an excuse. It is thought that Affirmative Action’s ability is limited, with no power or authority over a group of people who have a certain agenda. “Affirmative Action is a brave group fighting for equality and fairness. They get a lot of hostility just for doing their job.”

It is thought that there is no visible administrative leadership to take up the call for guidance and support in issues that relate to inclusion, diversity and people of color. There is no visible administrative leadership, but neither is there a commitment to these issues on the college level or the department level. Centralized and decentralized responsibility in these matters, working hand-in-hand, is necessary.

Faculty of Color Survey

The faculty sub-committee conducted an on-line survey to collect data regarding the issues that affect faculty of color at URI. Initially the chair of the faculty sub-committee, Donald Cunnigen, designed a set of questions that would be utilized to initiate discussions during focus groups planned by the commission. Some of the questions that were not appropriate for the focus group setting were further developed into survey questions and thus the idea of this on-line survey emerged. The survey itself consisted of 43 items. 37 of the items asked participants to rate the validity of statements provided based on a 6 point Likert-type scale ranging from “not applicable” to “strongly agree”, 1 item required a “yes” or “no” response, and 5 items were in the form of open-ended questions. The items on the survey contained statements and questions geared towards understanding the personal experiences of faculty at URI in the areas of faculty recruitment, campus climate and culture, and, resources and faculty retention. In addition, faculty members were asked to identify important factors for facilitating the recruitment of minority faculty, improving the campus climate, and retaining minority faculty.

In May of 2006, an electronic mail message requesting participation in completing the survey was sent to a list of 90 URI faculty members of color. The list of faculty members used to solicit participation was obtained from URI’s Office of Human Resources. Participation in the
The completion of this survey was voluntary and confidential. Additional reminders requesting faculty participation were sent in the months of June and July. The complete period of data collection was from the beginning of May to the end of July of 2006. At the end of this period, 32 participants had completed the survey.

The quantitative parts of the data collected through this survey were analyzed using frequency distributions. The data was separated into three topic areas: faculty recruitment, campus climate and culture, and resources and faculty retention. The qualitative aspects were also separated by topic area and emergent themes within and across the areas were identified.

90 faculty members of color were asked to participate in the completion of this survey. Of those, 32 members completed the survey. This represents a 35.6% rate of return. Because of the sensitive nature of the survey contents and the small size of the original list of solicited participants, demographic characteristics were not collected as part of this survey. We do know that the original list of faculty members includes both males and females of various ethnic origins. There is a wide range in the ages of the faculty and they consist of tenured and untenured members in various departments throughout the university. A discussion of the findings is below. For the full survey report, see appendix __.

**Campus Climate & Culture**

While views were mixed on all items addressed in the survey, the initial impressions and interactions with the University among faculty of color were generally positive, with most feeling that they had been recruited and interviewed consistent with their strengths as a candidate and that the University had negotiated fairly and honestly with respect to salary. The University was also seen to have offered a welcoming environment. However, the survey reveals a shift in these generally positive impressions once FOC have spent time on campus. A number of FOC feel undervalued, unsupported, culturally unengaged, and unfairly treated compared to non-minority faculty. In terms of the existence of discrepancies between the treatment of FOC and white faculty on campus, there is an even split in the views FOC. Half of those who responded to the survey agreed that discrepancies between treatment of faculty of color and white faculty on campus exist. When asked to explain, they indicated through individual comments that discrepancies vary between colleges and departments, that discrepancies are subtle and not so clear-cut and are therefore difficult to prove, that expectations for FOC and non-minority faculty are different, that FOC have to work harder to succeed and/or advance, that FOC have a difficult time being heard or making important changes, and that white faculty are afforded opportunities to which that FOC do not have access. An additional comment stated that although resources at URI are generally “abysmal, FOC are more adversely impacted by the lack of funds and/or administrative support”.

These findings suggest a need for a more in-depth investigation of the campus culture and climate as well as the design and implementation of a plan to create a more understanding, embracing and supportive campus environment. In addition, the findings also allege that unfair treatment and/or discrimination is ever-present on the URI campus and there is a strong need to implement a system of accountability and structure that begins with university leadership.
Faculty members also were asked about the types of support and/or assistance they have received in adjusting to Rhode Island and/or the campus environment. In response, faculty members mentioned that such groups and programs as the Instructional Development Program, the Multicultural Fellows Program, and the Association for Religion in Intellectual Life were beneficial. In addition, informal mentoring and mentor programs and the multicultural center were repeatedly cited. These programs are offering much needed support and guidance for our faculty of color. The implication here is that better access and promotion of these programs and initiatives are needed. In particular, greater access to mentors and/or mentoring programs within university departments is needed.

**Resources & Retention**

For the most part (53%), FOC agree that they have adequate equipment to conduct research but that is not the case for other types of support. The opinions of faculty members are nearly evenly divided (38% disagree, 37% agree) in their views of their department’s responsiveness to their requests for administrative support; and while 44% disagree that the university has provided them with research funding, another 38% are neutral on this subject. A clear plurality of faculty (44%) agree that their department has provided encouragement or assistance to participate in special projects or professional activities while that same plurality (44%) disagrees that the university has provided travel support for their presentation of research or participation in scholarly meetings.

In terms of retention, a plurality of the faculty (44%) agrees that the university has made a conscious effort to retain them personally. However this view is not extended to a generalized perception that the university is genuinely interested in maintaining its minority faculty. Indeed, only 37% agreed and another 41% of faculty felt neutral, showing a clear uncertainty about the university’s real intentions.

A contributing factor for retention of faculty at any level is the opportunity for advancement. Faculty members are divided in the level of agreement with the proposition that the university clearly explains the requirements for scholarly productivity in the tenure process (40% agree while 38% disagree). The highest percentage of FOC (50%), however, clearly disagrees that the requirements for scholarly productivity reflect the quality of research support available and this reinforces the idea that the university expects a level of productivity that it is not willing to support for all faculty.

Based on the responses to this survey, the availability of resources, particularly funding for research and professional development including travel expenses are directly tied to job satisfaction and retention. It is therefore important for the university to increase it’s funding in these areas and to insure that similar levels of funding are available from University sources to all faculty members.
Facilitating Recruitment of Minority Faculty

When asked to provide the most important factors that will facilitate the recruitment of minority faculty, the responses of current faculty of color clearly indicated a need for significant changes in three major areas: campus environment, compensation and resources, and leadership. In terms of campus environment, faculty emphasized a need to openly discuss and understand the issues that minority faculty currently face and the need for movement toward making the university’s environment more culturally sensitive and embracing. In order to do so, faculty members suggest that there is a need to increase the number of minority students, faculty, and staff on campus. There must also be a serious demonstration that faculty of color are treated seriously and fairly, especially in terms of opportunities for advancement. Faculty members cited a need to establish networks to promote interaction between faculty of color both on campus and in the local communities. Faculty also agree that compensation packages must consist of serious financial incentives that include competitive salaries, assistance with moving expenses, financial support for research, travel expenses to conferences, research-related presentations, and professional development. Observing that the university loses out on highly qualified minority candidates to universities that are more prompt in making a competitive offer, they identified the need to speed up the hiring process. In order to facilitate these changes, faculty members suggest that change must first occur within the university’s leadership. More specifically, they suggested that key leadership positions within colleges and central university administration be held by faculty and staff of color.

Improving Campus Climate and Retaining Minority Faculty

The most important factors for improving the climate and retention of minority faculty on campus according to existing faculty of color are very similar to those for recruitment mentioned above. The creation of a more culturally sensitive and embracing campus environment that includes a demonstrated commitment to increasing the diversity of its faculty, staff, and student body is of high importance. In addition, faculty of color want to receive the same opportunities for advancement and the same level of responsibility as that enjoyed by majority faculty members. The need for mentoring opportunities and a mentoring system was also expressed. Suggestions also included more competitive compensation and support that includes funding for teaching and professional development, mentoring, and professional networks.

Review of Best Practices

An increasing number of students, particularly under-represented and minority students, are graduating from high school and pursuing a college education. However, this increase in students entering higher education is not reflected in local or national graduation rates. There has been ample research conducted investigating the factors for student attrition in higher education. Researchers have found that a student’s decision to discontinue their college education is influenced by cognitive, social, and institutional factors (Tinto, 1975; Swail, 2003; Vargas, 2006). Specifically, primary institutional factors include the lack of: academic support;
consistent academic advising and mentoring; as well as, effective instructional staff (Swail, 2003).

In addition, women and people of color are still grossly underrepresented among college faculty and leadership. Recent figures report there are now 33.6% women in full-time faculty positions and 12.2% of people of color holding full time faculty position, 9.2% are full professors (Carter & Wilson, 1997, as reported in Humphreys, 1998). These figures have significantly improved from figures of a few years back. However, taking into account that women now represent more than half of the enrollment in higher education, and that the enrollment figures for people of color continue to rapidly rise, the number of women and people of color in faculty positions remains significantly low.

Other vital research on student retention also supports that diversity (the lack of) among the faculty and staff in an institution directly affects the success of its students. As Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005), stated in their research, “a diverse faculty ensures that students see people of color in roles of authority and as role models and mentors”. They further go on to state, “failure to pursue a more diverse faculty sends a message of insincere commitment to diversity.”

All of the research and literature discussed above portray a systematic dilemma. It is clear that a higher representation of minority faculty and staff is needed in our institutions of higher learning. An increase in these numbers would positively affect the attendance and success of minority students in higher education. In order to increase the number of minority faculty and staff, we need to improve recruitment and retention practices for this population which also includes increasing the pool of qualified individuals, which in turn means necessitates an improvement in the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of minority students in higher education. How do we make this happen? It can be done and in some institutions it is already being done, successfully. The following is a review of some recent literature and institutional initiatives in these areas.

Recruitment and Retention of Minority Faculty & Staff

How can institutions of higher education attract and effectively retain its minority faculty and staff population? Many recent studies have attempted to tackle aspects of this national problem by studying causes for faculty/staff turnover and examining successful recruitment and retention practices. Research has noted top reasons for minority faculty’s dissatisfaction with jobs in academia include, feelings of isolation, experiences with prejudice and discrimination, lower salaries, lower professional ranks, and lack of tenured status (Tack & Patitu, 1992, as reported in Gubitosi-White, 1998) Research has also suggested the conditions under which attempts to diversifying the faculty can thrive (Ingle, 2006). Some of the top factors and characteristics are listed below.

Characteristics of Successful Institutional Diversity Initiatives

- Diversity Task Force/Committee is truly diverse representing various colleges, departments, and offices.
- There is a plan for how the recommended diversity initiative will take place.
• Seek expertise from colleagues who have gone through a similar process or have conducted research on the topic.
• The existing campus climate in all areas of the university must be assessed, uncovered, and improved.
• Diversity initiatives must be linked with higher levels of university administration and its importance must be made publicly visible, from its mission statement to continuous communication of progress.
• Create a position at the level of senior administration whose charge is to oversee the diversity plan and ensure that related tasks are completed and its goals met. In addition, this position will also advise the president on all issues pertaining to equity and diversity.

Factors that increase recruitment and retention of Minority faculty and staff
• Publish vacancies in diverse local and national publications
• Request suggestions for qualified applicants for vacancies from the existing faculty and staff.
• Offer competitive compensation that includes competitive salary and benefits, moving expenses,
• Provide financial support for research and professional development including travel expenses.
• Provide opportunities for professional development both on and off campus, including cultural competence and diversity training.
• Provide mentoring and community support primarily during the first year of employment and during the tenure-track process.
• Equally acknowledge and reward effective research, teaching, and service.
• Foster a campus climate that believes in and rewards collaboration, welcoming & supporting new members, and, actively acting as role models and mentors to junior faculty, staff, and students.
• Increase levels of diversity within the students, faculty & staff, including university administration.
• Increase the diversity within and support for PhD students, including incentives to those who will pursue faculty or administrative positions at the university upon successful completion.
• Promote and encourage the continuation of education for all current employees, allowing reasonable accommodations when work scheduling conflicts with class time.
• Provide opportunities for increased responsibility and advancement.
• Provide and support linkages with community partners and faculty/staff from other local higher education institutions.

Under Represented / Minority Student Retention & Graduation

In an effort to gather information about successful efforts that support and increase the retention of minority and/or under-represented students in higher education, information about existing minority support programs was collected, compared and examined. The focus was placed on universities both similar to URI and in the eastern part of the US. A small sample of institutions was selected based on their level of minority population and minority graduation rate. Five universities were reviewed; University of Virginia, University of Connecticut, University of
New Hampshire, University of Iowa, University of Delaware. The primary focus was to discover and understand the initiatives being made at these universities to increase retention and graduation rates of its minority student population, primarily focusing on peer mentoring programs.

In studying various initiatives and programs at these institutions, an observation was made that these varied greatly from one institution to another. Some peer mentoring programs were university wide based out of first-year programming offices while others were found within existing minority support programs. Programs utilized different sets of beliefs and principles in their efforts to accomplish the same set of goals. For the most part, programs aimed to assist students in transitioning and adjusting to college life, introducing them to university resources, other students, faculty and staff, and, helping them to maintain good academic standing. Most of these programs were voluntary in nature and required an application process; however, all who apply were accepted in the program and assigned a mentor based on similar interests. A couple of programs were mandatory, particularly programs that were housed within contractual minority support programs. All of the programs required a commitment ranging from 1 semester to the entire first-year. After this time, continuation was encouraged although not required.

Although these programs varied in their design and implementation, they are all very successful programs in their respective institutions. One commonality that was observed was that all of these institutions have in place an active plan that addresses institutional issues of diversity. All of these institutions have made great strides in their commitment to diversity by establishing task forces or commissions to investigate the status of people of color and/or issues of diversity on their campuses. This effort was typically followed by a recommended Diversity Plan by the instituted committees. In all of these institutions a major component of that plan was the appointment of a leadership administrative position who would guide the institution in the implementation of the plan and in all future issues of equity and diversity. See appendix __ for a list of the institutions studied along with information about the organizational initiatives undertaken and the minority support programs available including peer mentoring programs. Below is a summation of the characteristics of institutional programmatic initiatives that led to higher rates of minority student retention among the institutions studied.

**Summary of Characteristics of Successful Minority Retention Programs**

- Programs exist in an environment undergoing public and highly visible diversity initiatives that demonstrate: a serious commitment to increasing the diversity of its students, faculty and staff (including university leadership); a serious commitment to creating a welcoming, accepting, and understanding campus culture; and, a system of accountability that will track and report on the progress of diversity initiatives.
- Identify inequities in educational outcomes of minority students and eliminate their underlying causes.
- Continuous Academic Advising (weekly or bi-weekly) and Mentoring (typically peer mentoring programs) are mandatory for the first academic year or in the least for the first semester.
- Peer mentors are provided with compensation (either work study or course credit) for their participation.
• Peer mentors receive on-going training throughout the duration of the program.
• Well-coordinated, detailed orientation programs are provided prior to the start of the academic semester.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

1. Continue support of Special Programs for Talent Development, but develop recruitment strategies to attract students of color who do not meet the Talent Development profile. This should include recruitment of both in-state and out-of-state students.

2. Institute an orientation program for students of color that is designed to provide familiarization with available services.

3. Develop mentoring programs for students of color that address both academic and social issues.

4. Develop programming designed to form networks and promote associations between students of color and that would introduce students of color to staff and faculty of color.

5. Coordinate activities designed for students with those addressing similar issues for staff and faculty.

6. Focus on local recruitment of staff of color in entry level and service positions.

7. Provide an orientation/development program for all staff members that emphasizes the value placed by the University on diversity and inclusion as well as the more routine introduction to duties and expectations, and monitor the success of the program.

8. Provide institutional support for an Association for Faculty and Staff of Color through the provision of staff support for scheduling and coordination of activities.

9. Provide an orientation for new faculty members of color to share both a social and professional introduction to the University and the area.

10. Develop a formal mentoring program that continues to support faculty of color from their arrival through the tenure and promotion process.

11. Incorporate discussions of the value placed on diversity by the University in orientation programs for all new faculty members.

12. Provide greater weight to outreach and advising in the annual review process.
13. Provide greater focus to the recruitment of students and faculty by using a position that is split between Admissions and Affirmative Action that is dedicated to the recruitment of faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students of color.

14. Create and fill a position for a Chief Diversity Officer.

Conclusion

Despite increases in the diversity of the University community over the past 30 years, available demographic data indicates that there is the need for continued efforts to diversify all parts of the URI community. Information gained in the present study demonstrates that these efforts are strongly affected by campus climate for members of groups who are under-represented. The existence of the several URI programs and initiatives designed to increase diversity and provide a more welcoming and supportive climate for members of groups under-represented at the University provides ample evidence that serious attempts to diversify the community have been made. However, it is clear that these attempts have produced neither the desired degree of diversity nor an optimal campus climate. Comments in focus groups and responses to surveys all attest to the perception that diversity has not been woven into the fabric of the university community. While implementation of the individual recommendations above might lead to the type of modest advances reflected in the data reported here, these recommendations would involve a number of different administrative units with different lines of reporting and authority. This in turn would lead to the same fragmentation of effort that currently exists.

Other universities faced with these issues have responded with a more promising approach, and one that would appear to meet the needs of the University of Rhode Island. Recognizing the need for more centralized attention to and responsibility for diversity efforts, several universities have created the position of Chief Diversity Officer (Gose, The Chronicle of Higher Education, September 29, 2006). These positions vary depending on institutional need and size and carry such titles as vice provost, vice president or vice chancellor, but all have responsibility for guiding the diversity efforts of their institutions (Williams and Wade-Golden, Inside Higher Ed, April 18, 2006).

At the University of Rhode Island the position of Chief Diversity Officer would be broadly responsible for affecting all parts of campus life that deal with diversity and inclusion. To be effective in this, the position must have supervisory authority over those units that separately have central roles in diversity and inclusion, and would include among others, the Office of Multicultural Student Services, Talent Development, Disability Student Services, the Women’s Center and the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Without such supervisory authority, the position would be unable to insure that the goals of these units were mutually supportive in moving toward the university’s goals for diversity and inclusion and would forfeit any possibility for synergy among these units. The position also would have a strong collaborative component and would work with such groups as Deans and Department Chairs to influence the hiring of new faculty, with Human Resources to find approaches for diversifying the staff, with undergraduate and graduate admissions to develop and implement strategies for
student recruitment, and with a variety of other offices to effect change in the campus climate. In some quarters, proposals for the establishment of Chief Diversity Officers have been met with the criticism that the creation of such a position would have the effect of “ghettoizing” diversity by having one person shoulder the total responsibility for diversity and inclusion. However, one of the major duties of the position would be to educate the University community regarding the value of diversity and to have the community accept shared responsibility for achieving the University’s goals for diversity and inclusion (Williams and Wade-Golden, Inside Higher Ed, April 18, 2006).

To be effective in carrying out these responsibilities, the Chief Diversity Officer would need the full support of the President and would have to be part of the President’s Team. This would insure that the Chief Diversity Officer has access to the President and other senior officers and is able to enlist their support in the wide range of activities that have an impact on diversity issues. An appointment at the level of vice president also would have symbolic value in demonstrating the University’s commitment to its diversity goals as outlined in the University’s strategic plan.


http://www.diversityweb.org/diversity_innovations/faculty_staff_development/recruitme nt_tenure_promotion/index.cfm


http://www.diversityweb.org/diversity_innovations/student_development/recruitment_retention_mentoring/intrusive_advising.cfm


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