Recommendations Regarding Implementation of the
Diversity and Inclusiveness Initiatives
Of the URI Strategic Plan

Recommendations by the Student Affairs Diversity Committee

and Student Affairs Directors in Consultation with Vice President Tom Dougan

Compiled February 26, 2007

The Student Affairs Diversity Committee proposals contained in this document are based on several underlying assumptions:

- The responsibility to create and maintain an inclusive environment at the University of Rhode Island is a shared community effort. This responsibility should not be seen as the singular purview of departments and offices whose primary focus is multiculturalism and diversity.

- All students, faculty and staff should be held equally responsible for creating and sustaining an inclusive campus culture and climate and should be held accountable for actions that delay or impede inclusiveness.

- We see students as members of the broader community and as future ambassadors of the University of Rhode Island. The workplace and communities they will enter during internships and upon graduation expect not only awareness of inclusion, but proactive support. It is our job as an institution to ensure that URI students practice inclusiveness as the rule, not the exception, as we send them out into the world. That is the "why" of the work we do.

- Within the Student Affairs Division, we believe that the prevailing definition of members of "underrepresented groups" should encompass people from a group who do not participate in a program in proportion to their numbers in the state population, irrespective of whether those disparities are viewed as the result of discrimination. Variables defining those groups include but are not limited to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, socioeconomic class, and national origin.

- It is important to acknowledge that the Student Affairs Division already features several model programs that promote learning, inclusiveness, and excellence, including the leadership curriculum (the Center for Student Leadership); the "Changing the Culture" faculty and staff development seminars (Disability Services); the Annual GLBTQ Symposium (the GLBT Center); URI Diversity Week and the URI Diversity Awards (the Multicultural Center); the assorted

academic support programs (the Talent Development Programs); and the Rose Butler Browne Mentoring Program for Women of Color (the Women's Center).

Area 1:
Enrollment, retention, and graduation rates
of students from under-represented groups

University Goal 1: Achieve the enrollment of a talented and diverse community of students totaling 16,000 (13,000) FTE by the conclusion of this plan.

Division Goal: Increase the number of students admitted to the Talent Development Program by 100 over the course of this plan.

Action: Expand the Guaranteed Admission Program (GAP) to eight additional high schools and middle schools over the course of this plan.

Action: Identify a Student Affairs team to work with Admissions and Talent Development to target a specific schools(s) for recruitment.

University Goal 2: Increase the first-year retention rate of freshmen to 84% in 2008-2009.

Division Goal: Increase the retention rate of first-year students in Talent Development by 3% over the course of this plan.

Action: Develop a peer mentor program for first-year TD students.

Action: Seek annual increases in the Hardge Grant equal to or greater than the annual increase in tuition.

Division Goal: Develop and identify resources that promote out-of-classroom interaction between faculty, staff, and students.

Action: Increase participation of faculty in programs at the Rainbow Diversity House.

Action: "Bring a faulty member to dinner" program sponsored by the Women's Center and Rainbow Diversity House.

University Goal 3: Increase the number of students who graduate in six years by 2%.

Division Goal: Increase the effectiveness of mentoring, career and personal advising, and leadership development.

Action: Mentoring programs will be developed and/or continued in Residence Life, the Women's Center, Talent Development, and Student Life.

Action: The Counseling Center will seek to hire staff from under-represented groups and expand outreach to freshmen and students of color.

Action: The Counseling Center will augment in-service training on multicultural counseling for all counselors.

University Goal 6: Increase the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of underrepresented groups, including students with disabilities.

Division Goal A: **Develop and present a checklist of best practices for assessing needs, developing and evaluating programs, and progress toward diversity goals.**

Action Plan: Benchmark similar institutions for best practices; develop a checklist.

Division Goal B: As part of overall University assessment, a review of strategies and outcomes will be conducted on **all areas in Student Affairs, including Athletics, Bookstore, Career Services, Counseling Center, Dining Services, GLBT Center, Health Services, Housing and Residential Life, Memorial Union and Student Activities (including Facility, Student Involvement, Center for Leadership), Multicultural Student Services, Recreation, Talent Development, and Student Life (including Commuter Housing, Disability Services, Lifesaver, Substance Abuse Services, Judicial System, Women's Center) and the consequent recommendations funded as appropriate.**

Action Plan: Develop outcomes for all SA departments, including how outcomes will be assessed.

Action: Assess outcomes.

Action: Benchmark similar institutions for successful retention programs.

Action: Establish and maintain a network of trained and culturally competent staff in Student Affairs to serve as resources including diversity mentors; establish resources that encourage and enhance the development and maintenance of the cultural competence of all staff.

Action: Develop and enhance outreach efforts to University College with special attention to international students.

Action: Identify and seek alternative (external) funding sources for implementing recommendations.

Comments:

The SADIV Committee must communicate to all our colleagues the necessity for a "whole campus" approach that commits each unit in the Division to responsibility for the design and implementation of diversity strategies. In the vast majority of campus diversity initiatives, it is the "diversity" programs that are singled out and given responsibility for these initiatives without adequate resources, staff, or authority to bring about the needed transformation. Diversity initiatives have the best chance for success when the predominant institutional (or divisional) focus is mobilized in support. This perspective is articulated in Stage, Frances, and Hamrick, Florence, "Diversity Issues: Fostering Campus-wide Development of Multiculturalism," Journal of College Student Development, 35 (5), 331-336.

Division Goal C: Increase the retention rate of underrepresented students by 3% over the course of this plan.

Action: Disaggregate and share with Student Affairs units retention and other institutional data, such as NSSE, pertaining to underrepresented populations on campus, as well as demographic data. Utilize data to develop profiles of students from each underrepresented group who persist to graduation.

Action: Develop a peer-advising program for first-year students from under-represented groups.

Action: Increase funding support for student organizations that have as their mission the provision of involvement opportunities to underrepresented student populations.

Action: Increase staff support for those offices which have as their primary mission serving under represented populations, as well as staff support for other offices that offer support/programming in these areas.

Action: Provide more ethnic food in dining halls, as well as food that satisfies diverse dietary obligations such as halal, kosher, vegan; work to hire more minority staff.

Action: Encourage University policymakers to increase the proportion of need-based financial aid relative to merit-based financial aid.

Action: Encourage University policymakers to monitor and develop strategies to address financial aid gaps, instances in which increased student costs outpace institutional, state, and federal aid; and examine the impact on student persistence of front-loading practices.

Action: Increase opportunities and awareness for alumni to earmark contributions to Student Affairs units.

Action: Examine the University's work-study program to improve its potential for improving retention.

Action: Publicize scholarship search engines.

Action: Increase communication and collaboration between the Student Affairs Division and University College regarding student retention issues such as living and learning communities.

Action: Collaborate with University College in developing strategies to assist student cohorts from underrepresented groups in locating and connecting with academic support services.

Action: Collaborate with University College to explore feasibility of utilizing the full range of services offered through the National Student Clearinghouse.

Action: Collaborate with University College and the Office of International Students to further the involvement of international students in campus life.

Action: Authorize the SADIV Committee to work with each Student Affairs unit to provide coordination and consultation on student retention initiatives.

Comments:

An emerging professional consensus holds that successful student retention strategies in higher education have as their underlying objective the generation of involvement, the focus of physical, social, cultural, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual energy that students devote to the institutional experience. See Alexander Astin, "Student Involvement : A Developmental Theory for Higher Education", Journal of College

*Student Development, 40 (5) (September-October, 1999), 518-529. Laura Rendon et al,
"Theoretical Considerations in the Study of Minority Student Retention in Higher
Education," applies the theory of engagement –similar to Astin's theory–to the
experience of students of color. In addition, student affairs practitioners enhance campus
retention initiatives through programs that (1) contribute to an inclusive and supportive
campus climate; (2) increase the degree of commitment of the institution and diverse
student populations to each other; and (3) assist students in clarifying and constructing
pathways to their educational, occupational, and developmental goals . See Watson Swail
et al, Retaining Minority Students in Higher Education, ASHE Higher Education Report,
Vol. 30 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.) Among the variety of retention programs
offered by student affairs programs at other institutions are pre-admission and
orientation programs, mandatory first-year counseling, intrusive monitoring and
assessment of first-year student academic progress, learning and living communities,
residence hall cocurricula, student organization support, first-year experiences,
leadership, diversity, and nonviolence curricula and cocurricula, and staff and peer
mentoring.*

**Division Goal D: Increase membership and participation of under-represented students in
existing student leadership development, organization training, and career education.**

> Action: Conduct inventory of current mentoring programs; identify new initiatives and
> monitor progress in new areas.

> Action: Conduct assessment of current level of participation and what leadership and
> career advising/career education opportunities exist.

> Action: Conduct focus groups and discuss and identify ways to increase participation.

> Action: Utilize the Rose Butler Browne program model to increase leadership
> opportunities for men of color and other under-represented student populations.

> Action: Through in-service training, all departments that provide services to students
> will focus on the needs of GLBT students, and students from other under-represented
> groups.

**Division Goal E: Use outreach programs to high schools to maximize impact and maintain
ongoing relationships between Student Affairs' staff and participating students in those high
schools.**

> Action: Identify and support existing SA outreach programs to high schools.

> Action: Identify a team of student and staff ambassadors to go out to one or more
> additional schools, define the outreach program in consideration of the program's specific
> needs, and identify one or more collaborating partners.

Division Goal F: Use food as a basis for recruitment and retention.

> Action: Seek funding to allow Dining Services to provide food for SA recruitment and
> retention efforts.

> Action: Provide food scholarships to students with financial needs.

> Action: Provide signage in dining halls explaining the ethnic food offerings.

**Division Goal G: Address concerns about safety of students, staff, and faculty from
underrepresented groups.**

Action: Collaborate with Campus Police, Risk Management, Housing and Residence Life, Talent Development, the Women's Center, the GLBT Center, and others in assessing campus safety and identifying best practices.

Action: Widely publicize a specific protocol for how students, staff and faculty report incidents of discrimination, bigotry and violence.

Area 2:
Hiring and retention of
staff from under-represented groups

University Goal 7: Increase hiring and retention of faculty and staff from under-represented groups.

Establish a Student Affairs Search and Retention Committee to work on many of these strategies.

Division Goal A: Develop a checklist and best practices instrument for assessing needs, developing and evaluating progress toward diversity goals.

Action: Identify best practices.

Action: Present best practices workshop to the Division.

Action: Make best practices information known to Vice Presidents, Directors, Affirmative Action Committee, Search Chairs.

Action: Assure that Student Affairs' staff are applying the information to develop strategies and to increase recruitment and retention.

Division Goal B: Build an active and current list of organizations that maintain resume files of potential employees from under-represented groups who can be recruited into hiring pools, and develop strategies and resources for contacting members of those groups.

Action: Develop and maintain a list of organizations, newsletters, and websites that maintain data bases of potential candidates from under-represented groups.

Action: Develop relationships with universities that have a high number of under-represented populations.

Action: Create a system for maintaining files and making them available to Search Committees.

Division Goal C: Explore semester or yearlong staff exchanges with diverse colleagues from other institutions.

Action: Identify and publicize a process whereby individuals can seek an exchange.

Action: Identify institutions that may be interested in staff exchange.

Action: Encourage short-term (one day to one month) visits to and from diverse colleagues from other institutions.

Division Goal D: Create a mentor system for new hires from under-represented groups and establish a program in Student Affairs.

Action: Identify best practices; develop a model for Student Affairs.

Action: Develop and articulate mentor responsibilities.

Action: Identify staff who are interested in mentoring; provide mentors with training/orientation.
Action: Develop a process for providing funding for mentor program.

Action: Make mentoring an important part of staff members' jobs.

Action: Assess the success of the mentor program.

Division Goal E: Provide training to all search committees regarding possible sources of bias.

Action: Consult with ADVANCE about programs that are being developed to help search committees avoid possible sources of bias.

Action: Develop programs for search committees, chair, etc.

Action: Train a core group that can implement the program.

Division Goal F: Share success stories of how people from underrepresented groups were hired and the benefits to URI.

Action: Annual presentation of success stories in staff development program.

Action: Articles in electronic newsletter mailed to Student Affairs' staff each semester.

Division Goal G: Conduct exit interviews with all departing staff from under-represented groups.

Action: Establish and announce policy

Action: Develop list of questions and a protocol for exit interviews, including who conducts the interview and what is done with the results.

Action: Communicate information gained.

Action: Assure appropriate follow up occurs.

Division Goal H: Share information about the environment on campus and in the State with job candidates from under-represented groups.

Action: Develop a plan for how candidates can meet with staff from under-represented groups.

Division Goal I: Improve availability of information on where staff can go if they need assistance.

Action: Improve websites that address staff needs. Assist ADVANCE in establishing a page for under-represented staff.

Action: Increase number of up-to-date flyers, etc, that explain services available on campus and make them widely available.

Division Goal J: Develop procedures that encourage hiring of staff from under-represented groups for all categories of full-time positions and for all temporary and part time appointments, since many University employees enter full-time positions from temporary or interim positions.

> Action: Require that except in unique and urgent situations, all job openings in Student Affairs be filled subsequent to a full search.
> Action: Require that all searches have a chair.
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> Action: Develop search check-lists which chairs are responsible for carrying out
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> Action: Create a policy to ensure that all job descriptions over which Student Affairs has control or influence do not unnecessarily limit the pool of potential applicants and do include pertinent multicultural competencies.
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> Action: Assess the effectiveness of all searches by developing and sending to each search committee chair a survey requesting strategies used to include underrepresented candidates in the pool, and to discuss why the search was or was not successful in advancing the Division's diversity goals.

Division Goal K: Establish a division-wide code of ethics and professional practice that should inform our workplace interactions at all levels—between professionals, between students, and between professionals and students.

> Action: Utilize ideas and models from sources such as the ACPA Ethical Principles and Standards and NASPA's Standards of Professional Practice.

Comments:

Division Goals A, K*: An essential ingredient in improving URI's attractiveness to members of underrepresented groups is the institutional climate, the inclusivity of its relationships, attitudes, norms, and values. When "individuals or groups experience ascribed social distance, invisibility, devaluation, lack of respect, and discrimination" based on group membership or departure from prevailing cultural norms, they can be said to experience a 'chilly climate,'" according to Bernice R. Sandler et al, The Chilly Classroom Climate : A Guide to Improve the Education of Women (Washington, DC, 1992). A chilly climate isolates and undermines the ability of people to participate fully and effectively in the workplace and to perform and develop to their full potential. See also Rapp, Janet L., "Staff Diversity: The Need for Enhancing Minority Participation in Student Affairs," College Student Affairs Journal 16 (2) (Spring, 1997), 73-84.*

Division Goal K*: The ACPA Ethical Principles and Standards (www.myacpa.org/ethics/statement) state that "Multicultural competence is a fundamental element of ethical practice" (introduction to Standard 2.) The Principles integrate multicultural competence into all aspects of professional ethics and responsibilities, and can serve as a basis for further examination of our goals, practices, principles and standards.*

Division Goals A-K: *Typically, the best practices for diversity hiring and recruiting in Student Affairs include an emphasis on diversity as a core value of both the Division and the unit; the establishment of accountability of supervisors for making good faith efforts and for results subject to evaluation; the incorporation of diversity training into new-hire orientation; regular training of senior managers/supervisors focused on clarifying roles and building skills for organizational change; mentoring of new employees; rewards and/or recognition; continuous assessment of climate; development of a professional code of ethics; and a review of policies and practices, such as hiring, salary, promotions, and norms of organizational culture that are not inclusive. See Doyle, Jennifer M., A Comprehensive Resource for the Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Faculty, Administrators and Staff in Higher Education (Philadelphia: Villanova University, 2004.)*

Area 3:
Creating a supportive environment—
--visible and vibrant institutional commitment to multicultural competence (awareness, knowledge, and skills)
--physical environment that promotes diversity and inclusion

University Goal 8: Create a visible and vibrant institutional commitment to multicultural competence (awareness, knowledge, skills).

    Division Goal A: Strengthen the advising of student organizations to enhance cultural competency of student groups, including leadership and organizational skills.

        Action: Clarify existing structure of student groups and faculty-staff advising.

        Action: Initiate conversations with Student Senate to identify issues and concerns.

        Action: Include training on cultural competence in Student Senate's Presidents' meetings.

        Action: Develop and implement an advising program; find collaborators to be allies in advising.

        Action; Identify best ways to implement diversity training of student organizations, including current cultural competency instruments.

    Division Goal B: Revitalize the Rainbow Diversity House Program.

        Action: Establish an advisory group of students, faculty, and staff.

        Action: Evaluate and review the application and placement process for student residents.

        Action: Conduct an open house event to market the Diversity House and its programs.

        Action: Market the facility and related programs via webpage, if interested forms, brochures, props, etc.

        Action: Develop collaborative opportunities with URI 101, leadership minor, Women's Center, Multicultural Center, Talent Development, and other University offices and student organizations.

        Action: Initiate efforts to involve faculty in all aspects of the Rainbow Diversity House, including programming and advisory committees.

        Action: Evaluate programs each semester.

    Division Goal C: Identity external funding sources for program support.

        Action: Participate in the Student Affairs' grant and fund-raising committee.

        Action: Authorize the SADIV Committee to explore with the URI Office of Grants and Research, the NSF ADVANCE Program, and the SA Division Grants Committee the

prospects for acquiring a substantial grant utilizing a model similar to the NSF ADVANCE Program or the Changing the Culture Program.

Action: Identify potential donors, service learning support, corporations, and alumni and cultivate connections with these as appropriate.

Action: Research free performers, presenters, etc.

Division Goal D: **Ensure that Housing and Residence Life incorporate programs and activities each semester that promote cultural competence.**

Action: Form a student-staff Residence Life Subcommittee to develop and promote educational programs and activities to promote cultural competence.

Action: Incorporate cultural competence training into staff-student training.

Action: Identify resources and programs that address cultural competence.

Action: Build in accountability.

Division Goal E: **Develop a comprehensive URI Diversity Climate Assessment program with methods and instruments, beginning with existing data and developing new sources.**

Action: Research what other campuses have done and develop or obtain a tool that can by used by staff, students and faculty.

Action: Provide options for anonymous replies.

Action: Make use of Surveymonkey and/or other similar instruments.

Action: Provide incentives for completing the instrument.

Action: Evaluate and report the data obtained, making a commitment to ongoing conversation about climate and making adjustments.

Division Goal F: **Develop and offer staff cultural competence training for all SA employees.**

Action: Provide staff development programs on multicultural issues, some by internal trainers and some by trainers from off campus.

Division Goal G: **Encourage the SA Diversity Committee to track and record its accomplishments, and to prepare an annual report.**

Division Goal H: **Increase visibility of University commitment to inclusiveness.**

Action: Develop a SA division-sponsored web page on diversity, with links to diversity content on existing sites, to enhance the visibility of the work of the SA Division and its SADIV Committee.

Action: Advocate for a diversity presence on the URI home page that will link to the Student Affairs site as well as other areas.

Action: Create marketing, branding and public relations strategies to ensure increasing visibility of URI's multicultural/inclusive commitment.

Action: Review existing publicity for inclusiveness.

Division Goal I: **Ensure follow-up on the Division's Diversity Strategic Plan for Inclusion and Diversity.**

> Action: Devote an annual Student Affairs Directors Meeting to a discussion of climatic and cultural issues throughout the Division emphasizing progress toward the Division's Diversity Goals as specified within the University Strategic Plan as well as related work and issues as identified within the various SA units.
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> Action: Hold an annual Student Affairs Division town meeting to discuss similar issues.
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> Action: Develop guidelines and/or checklists to help departments examine their diversity initiatives.
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> Action: Authorize the SADIV Committee to work with each Student Affairs unit to provide coordination and consultation on the unit's diversity initiatives.

Division Goal J: **Increase the participation of diverse students in career services education/awareness/planning events and programs.**

> Action: Gather statistics on distribution of students from under-represented groups among the various majors.
>
> Action: Conduct focus groups to generate ideas of how to reach more students from under-represented groups.

Comments:

According to Suh, Eunyoung Eunice, "The Model of Cultural Competence through an Evolutionary Concept Analysis," Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 15 (2) (April, 2004), 93-102, (multi)cultural competence "is an ongoing process with a goal of achieving the ability to work effectively with culturally diverse groups and communities [while applying] a detailed awareness, specific knowledge, refined skills, and personal and professional respect for cultural attributes, both differences and similarities." For a discussion of seven core competencies needed for ethical and effective practice in the student affairs profession, see Pope, Raechele et al, Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

As we increase our levels of (multi)cultural competence, we are more likely to work to increase the inclusivity of the institution's climate, the networking of its relationships, and the expansiveness of its culture, defined here as the pattern of formal, explicit policies as well as unstated policies and informal, day-to-day practices that reflect the ways in which people make sense in their environment. Within the URI Student Affairs Division, each member of the SADIV Committee is urged to utilize the strengths of social relationships and institutional influence to initiate further cultural momentum in the continuing campaign in which we have been assigned the task of transferring cultural diversity from the margins to the institutional center. From the example of the overwhelming majority of other institutions of higher education, it is clear that substantial improvements in institutional culture and climate will require additional funding. In the case of URI, it is equally clear that additional funding will have to come from external sources.

University Goal 5: Enhance total annual retention of non-State revenue by 15%.

Division Goal: Increase grants and donations to support programs by 10%.

Action: Explore viability of committing personnel resources to Division development efforts, especially in such areas as leadership development, women's issues, mental health and diversity.

University Goal 9: Improve the physical environment to promote diversity and inclusion.

Division Goal A: Enhance the multicultural ambience of campus living units: HRL/Dining/Greek/Memorial Union.

Action: Conduct a diversity sensitivity inventory of Student Affairs' facilities.

Action: Create areas in DS, HRL and the Memorial Union to showcase art from various cultural groups.

Division Goal B: Identify a better location and facility for the GLBT Center.

Action: Seek available space on Upper Campus. Make relocation of the Center a priority.

Division Goal C: Identify resources to address needs, including maintenance, for Talent Development and Multicultural Center facilities.

Action plans: Each facility support function (TD, MCC, Women's Center, GLBT) will create a facilities plan and a detailed fiscal plan.

Comments:

James H. Banning, "Ecosystem Design Assumptions," Campus Ecologist, 3 (1) (1985), 3, asserts that members of the campus environment shape and are shaped by the environment in which they live. Those living, working, learning, teaching, and performing in a given environment may engage in a range of behaviors, under an assortment of influences, including the physical environment. C. M. Deasy and T. Lasswell, Designing Places for People (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1985) identify eight categories of need-behaviors that can be influenced by the architecture of buildings: 1) friendship formation; (2) group membership; (3) personal space; (4) personal status; (5) territoriality; (6) communications; (7) navigation; and (8) personal safety.

Similarly, Herman Miller, "Rethinking the Classroom," compares and contrasts conventional classrooms with learning studios. From focus groups and interviews, he concluded that the learning studios' use of tables instead of fixed, individual desks, organic spatial arrangements instead of linear ones, and wireless technology positively influenced levels of interaction and engagement, psychological and physical comfort, and expectations of participation and accountability.

Recommendations to the University

Over-Arching Goal 1: **Improve communication among major committees concerned about equity issues: President's Commission on the Status of Women, President's Commission on the Status of Students, Staff and Faculty of Color; Affirmative Action Committee; Harassment Committee; ADVANCE; etc.**

> Action: Establish a coordinating team for equity.

> Action: Develop a brochure and website on various equity committees.

Over-Arching Goal 2: **Ascertain that a suitably trained Title IX coordinator has been named for the URI campus, and assure that the identity of this person is made known widely to the campus community.**

> Action: Discuss the need for this position with the University President and develop methods for publicizing the existence of the person and position if/when someone has been named.