

APPENDIX D

A Proposal to Expand Stony Brook's Multicultural and Gender Centers

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Introduction

In their report "Does Diversity Make a Difference? Three Research Studies on Diversity in the Classrooms," the American Council on Education and the American Association of University Professors (2003) emphasize that "leaders of all types of institutions hold that student diversity is educationally valuable." Accordingly, as a major public research institution and a world-class leader in higher education, Stony Brook University must fully embrace its diverse nature as a university, which includes but is not limited to race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, disabilities, sexual orientation, immigrant/international status, and socioeconomic class. Although the Campus Climate Committee's work focuses on diversity issues in the workplace that effect our faculty, staff, and graduate students, providing resources that promote the multicultural education of our diverse student population would a major step towards addressing multiculturalism at the institutional level. This proposal highlights the importance of multicultural education in creating campus climate and the critical role that our multicultural centers can have in promoting cross-cultural learning.

Diversity and Campus Climate

Stony Brook's undergraduate population is more diverse than it has ever been in the university's history. Our current profile of students indicates that of the 14,287 undergraduate students enrolled in Fall 2005, 35% self-identified as White (5,019); 22% as Asian American (3,171), 9% African American (1,349), another 9% Hispanic American, 5% international, and 19% Unknown/Other. Male and female students equally comprise the undergraduate student body. 83% of our undergraduates are from New York City and Long Island (11,874). 57% reside on campus (7,519) and 43% are commuters (5,597).

In addition, students from all over the world come to Stony Brook for our outstanding graduate programs. Ethnic and social diversity also exists within this population. In Fall 2005, of the 7,724 students enrolled in graduate programs, 19% are from other countries (1,473), 55% are White (4,228), 7% are Asian American (544), 6% African American, 4% Hispanic American, and 9% Unknown/Other. More than half (57%) of our graduate students are women (4,413). 76% of Stony Brook's full-time students are commuters (2,500) and 24% live on campus. Although this profile of our current students only scratches the surface, it depicts the broad range of ethnic and geographical diversity, and gender composition of our student community. The enrollment data shows that all Stony Brook students come from diverse backgrounds.

Consequently, they have critical multicultural education needs that the university must respond to if the campus climate is to be improved.

Stony Brook's existing cultural centers (i.e., UNITI Cultural Center and the Wo/Men's Center) need have a central role in teaching students about diversity and providing meaningful learning experiences that enhance their formal education. As multicultural centers, these facilities and the administrators that lead them must be knowledgeable and competent in multicultural education, and equipped to address the unique challenges and opportunities presented by our diverse university, especially in the areas of ethnicity/race, gender, and sexual orientation. An increase in staffing and adequate operating budgets are needed if these centers are to provide the level of programs, services, advocacy, and research necessary to positively impact our students' perceptions about diversity.

Multicultural Education Beyond the Classroom

Studies about racial diversity in higher education reveal the following:

- Socializing across racial lines and participating in discussions about racial issues have both been shown to be associated with widespread beneficial effects on student's academic and personal development, irrespective of race (Astin 1993; Villalpando 1994). Specifically, socializing with someone of a different racial group or discussing racial issues contributes to the students' academic development, satisfaction with college, level of cultural awareness, and commitment to promoting racial understanding.
- Having a diverse student body is associated with six other attributes of institutional climate: stronger commitment to multiculturalism, greater faculty emphasis on racial and gender issues in their research and in the classroom, and more frequent student involvement in cultural awareness workshops and ethnic studies courses (Chang 1996). Astin (1993) found that these environmental characteristics have also been shown to have positive impacts on student retention, overall college satisfaction, college GPA, intellectual self-confidence, and social-confidence.

Since studies in college student retention also show that students with a strong sense of community in campus communities are more likely to be fully connected or more integrated into the broader campus social system (Berger 1997), institutions need to implement efforts that promote multicultural education and build campus community. Jefferson (2003) affirms this by stating that "a wider, more complex approach requires that we consider multicultural education as a perspective, as a lens through which we see our individual selves, each other, education, and the world."

All educators must recognize that students have pre-conceived notions about people who are not like themselves and that such notions are based on their ethnicity/race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc. (Banks 2005, 1993). This has to be addressed if an institution such as Stony Brook University is to commit to the philosophy of multicultural education. Through inter-group activities and multicultural programs, the UNITI Cultural Center and the Wo/Men's Center can help the Stony Brook address prejudice by providing opportunities for students to explore their personal cultural identities and learn about the diverse backgrounds of people who are not like themselves. These centers can be change agents in prejudice/bias reduction and the empowerment of individual students and the campus community. This the first step towards

becoming what Jefferson calls becoming a *multicultural person*, one who is in the process of developing a multicultural perspective, as they become more educated (2003).

Expanding our Multicultural Centers

The UCC and Wo/Men's Center can have a central role in creating a campus environment at Stony Brook that helps our students move along the learning continuum towards becoming multicultural people. Jefferson's four-stage transformational model describes this developmental process that evolves from one's personal cultural identity and cultural immersion experiences (2003). With the appropriate resources, professionals who work at multicultural centers on college campuses are able to collaborate with faculty and other administrators to implement initiatives that foster multiculturalism on both the individual and organizational levels.

Expanding our centers can provide students with a broad range of cross-cultural experiences that augment their formal education. As centers of excellence in multicultural education, they should promote a philosophy that recognizes the strength that human diversity in all of its manifestations brings to the individual, campus community, and society. In addition, each should be vehicles for exploring issues related to individual and community values, leadership, and cultural acceptance.

Staffing for a cultural center typically consists of a senior administrator/director, program coordinator/advisor(s), administrative/clerical support, and graduate and undergraduate students (interns and paid staff). These kinds of positions exist at comparable public institutions of higher education, such as SUNY Albany, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Penn State University, and the 50 member campuses of the California Council of Cultural Centers in Higher Education. The professional staff must be competent in multiculturalism, well trained, and experienced in addressing diversity issues and group dynamics. A starting point for Stony Brook would be to provide a Multicultural Programs Coordinator/Advisor for the UNITI Cultural Center.

Function of the Multicultural Programs Coordinator/Advisor

The seasoned professional in this position will:

1. Work with the Campus Climate Task Force and other university departments to initiate and support programs and services that enrich Stony Brook's efforts to be a multicultural learning community and serve as a support person for our diverse student populations.
2. Collaborate with and coordinate programs with academic departments and Student Affairs/Enrollment Management areas to promote the multicultural education of students, build campus community across cultures, and fosters faculty/student interaction.
3. Coordinate diversity education programs that promote inclusion.
4. Serve as program advisor to Stony Brook's 95+ ethnic/culturally-based student clubs and organizations.
5. Provide student leadership development opportunities that foster multicultural education.
6. Manage the UNITI Cultural Center facilities on a daily basis.
7. Supervise graduate and undergraduate student interns and staff.

Resources Needed

Salary for Multicultural Programs Coordinator/Advisor

\$40,000 – \$50,000

(three to five years of professional experience required)

Funds to support operating and programming efforts \$10,000

Total Funding Requested \$50,000 - \$60,000

Since 1975, the UNITI Cultural Center has sponsored numerous educational and cultural programs that address and celebrate African American and Latino American cultures. In 2004, the UCC student organization expanded its mission to include programs about other aspects of human diversity, including Caribbean and Asian culture as well as gender issues. Although this broadened view was the direct result from increased student awareness about the diverse nature of our campus community, to this day the UNITI Cultural Center remains limited in its efforts to promote multiculturalism because it lacks dedicated professional staff. To empower the UCC to improve our campus climate, staffing and funding are needed. Similarly, additional staff is needed to support the Wo/Men's Center its expanded role in addressing gender identity issues and topics that affect our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender student community.

Conclusion

Today, creating a multicultural campus environment is one of the most important trends in higher education reform. Faced with the challenges and opportunities of its diverse learning community, many higher education institutions are assessing their campus climate. Penn State University "seeking to create an environment characterized by equal access and respected participation for all groups and individuals irrespective of cultural differences and, more importantly, where the multiplicity of characteristics possessed by persons are not simply tolerated but valued (2006)." Syracuse University and other campuses are conducting campus climate assessments and making bold changes to promote multicultural education both inside and outside of the classroom.

If Stony Brook University is to truly commit to becoming a multicultural university, our ultimate goal must include creating an environment where all members of our campus community can full and active participants in fulfilling Stony Brook's educational mission, which has achieving cultural pluralism as its central goal. As we strive to improve the campus climate, we have a unique opportunity to develop the UNITI Cultural Center and Wo/Men's Center so that this important aspect of the university's mission is further realized.

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