

# USI Board of Trustees

## Diversity Committee Annual Report

May 7, 2011

### **Diversity Committee Formation and Objectives**

The Diversity Committee of the University of Southern Indiana was created in response to House Enrolled Act 1256, authorized by the 2007 Indiana General Assembly (IC-21-27-8-7) which requires that each public institution of higher education create a diversity committee to meet this legislative mandate. One of its requirements is an annual report to the Board of Trustees.

The University's existing Affirmative Action Committee was adapted to meet the requirements of IC 21-27-8-7. The Diversity Committee currently consists of the following members:

*Karen Altstadt-Publications Associate, Publishing Services*  
*Kirat Baath-Contract Assistant Professor of Biology, Pott College of Science and Engineering*  
*Cynthia Brinker-Vice President for Government and University Relations*  
*Katherine Draughon-Executive Director, Office of Planning, Research, and Assessment*  
*Donna Evinger-Director, Human Resources, and Committee Chair*  
*Douglas Goeppner-ADA Coordinator, Human Resources*  
*Pamela Hopson-Director, Multicultural Center*  
*Maria Jalilpour-Student, Student Government Association Representative*  
*Timothy Jones-Manager, Foundation Accounting*  
*Ronald Rochon-Provost*  
*Barry Schonberger-Dean of Students, Student Affairs*  
*Rose Scruggs-Electronic Services Coordinator, Library Services*  
*Joseph Uduehi-Associate Professor of Art Education, College of Liberal Arts*  
*Deborah Carl Wolf-Assistant Dean, College of Nursing and Health Professions*

### **Diversity Committee Objectives and Initial Accomplishments**

As reported to this Board last year, the Diversity Committee incorporated and expanded upon the legislative mandate by establishing the following objectives:

1. Define the University's vision of diversity and recommend methods to integrate that vision with existing University policies and procedures;
2. Collect information on University programs and initiatives and community resources;

3. Review University employment policies and processes and recommend improvements intended to increase hiring of diverse candidates;
4. Review University complaint policies and processes concerning diversity issues and recommend improvements;
5. Review University programs and processes, developing recommendations as appropriate for improvements to existing programs and processes and for new programs and initiatives that promote recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff;
6. Recommend methods that increase awareness of the University's commitment to diversity;
7. Assess University diversity training and communications need and make recommendations;
8. Develop methods to assess the University's diversity efforts; and
9. Provide Annual Reports to the University's Board of Trustees.

Accomplishments of the Committee through FY2010 focused primarily on its top three objectives:

- Development of the University's vision of diversity
- Communication of the vision of diversity and the Committee's role throughout the University community by meetings with the President's Council; faculty, administrators, and support staff; deans and department chairs; Staff Council; Faculty Senate; and Student Government Association
- Information-gathering about existing University programs and initiatives that support diversity and preliminary research on community organizations that offer programs and activities related to diversity that may be of use to University faculty, staff, and students
- Research on aspirational peers for comparative policy, process and program ideas

## **University Diversity-Related Activities in FY 2011**

In early 2010, the University's planning process with this Board's approval confirmed a broad diversity goal as one of the six goals of the University's strategic plan:

- Increase the diversity of faculty, staff and student body

Subsequently, Diversity Committee members participated in the strategic planning process for this University goal. This process included a retreat to identify appropriate strategies and initiatives for this goal and the selection of University groups/committees to drive the goal. The Diversity Committee then reviewed and endorsed the strategies and initiatives arising from the strategic plan diversity goal. The strategies include:

- Develop activities and experiences that promote diversity as a value
- Enhance support networks for faculty, staff, and students of diverse backgrounds, including first-generation status
- Provide international programming for faculty and students

Several initiatives are now also being reviewed, and one of them – recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff, and students – fits directly with the mandate and objectives of this Committee.

The Diversity Committee will continue to participate in each of these strategies and initiatives through its members' participation and review of progress with the Committee. The Committee expects the University's work on these strategies and initiatives to provide significant contributions to the Committee's objectives, especially five through eight.

The Human Resources' department, in support of the diversity recruitment goals, acquired a new recruitment platform, PeopleAdmin. This software, which will launch by FY2012, streamlines the recruitment process and provides diversity-related benefits that include:

- Gathering of voluntary EEO data from applicants electronically at the time of application
- Facilitating real-time Human Resources' review of the diversity or need for diversity of applicant pools by position
- Minimizing search chairs' and search committees' reporting requirements so that they can focus on qualitative outreach and improved recruitment processes

As further support of recruitment processes, the Diversity Committee endorsed updates to the University's diversity/EEO-related advertising messages. The new diversity/EEO message in all University recruitment ads has both a long and short form as follows:

- The University of Southern Indiana is an equal opportunity, affirmative action educator and employer that values diversity, respects differences, and provides a sense of belonging and inclusion.
- The University of Southern Indiana is an equal opportunity, affirmative action educator and employer.

To support its research and communication objectives, the Committee has:

- Gathered information about community organizations that provide diversity-related activities in the community and existing or possible future partnership opportunities
- Guided the establishment of the University's first diversity-related web pages that share with the University faculty, staff, and students; applicants; and community:
  - The University's vision of diversity
  - Over twenty existing University programs and initiatives with diversity-related content and
  - Over a dozen University community and Evansville community diversity-related organizations and support groups
- Gathered sample employment policies from multiple aspirational peer organizations that will be used to review and recommend policy updates

The Committee's research found that, throughout the University, various faculty and staff, colleges and departments have undertaken or continued several diversity-related initiatives including:

- Annual events and programs throughout the year such as:
  - The International Food Expo featuring food and music of the many countries represented by USI's student population
  - The Martin Luther King Memorial Luncheon which this year featured nationally recognized keynote speaker Hill Harper
  - Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, USI men's march as a public commitment to preventing gender violence

- Phenomenal Women awards ceremony to recognize diversity contributions to USI and the Evansville community
- The Equity & Diversity Conference on multicultural education
- Live at the Apollo, an annual talent show that celebrates diversity within the USI student body
- Disability Awareness Month each year in March to raise awareness of disabilities and resources for students with disabilities
- Holiday Foreign Language Sing-Along, a December celebration of holiday songs sung in each of the languages taught at the University
- Global Community Culture Nights, programs in which student residents share their cultures with the USI community
- New events such as:
  - The New Harmony Interfaith Retreat led by international scholar and author John Philip Newell and nationally recognized Jewish and Islamic leaders
  - A Veterans' Support Cookout to show support and fundraise for local veterans
- New initiatives such as:
  - The Iraqi Young Leaders Student Exchange Program (in summer, 2010), an intensive leadership program for a group of undergraduate students from across Iraq
  - A series of Safe Zone training workshops to educate faculty and staff on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) issues, terminology, and resources; and a Breaking the Silence event to focus on issues of bullying and discrimination
  - A veterans' support position serving prospective and current students who are veterans, by developing programs and linking them to supportive services
  - A Student Support Services program to ensure the academic success of underserved populations including first-generation and low-income students as well as students with disabilities
- New organizations such as a Jewish Student Group and a Muslim Student Group

## **Plans for FY 2012**

During the upcoming fiscal year, the University and the Diversity Committee will:

- Develop strategic plan diversity-related initiatives
- Continue annual diversity-related events and initiatives as well as developing new initiatives
- Develop and review recommendations for diversity-related policy changes
- Review and evaluate complaint processes related to diversity
- Continue to expand diversity-related communication and training

The Committee looks forward to continued progress toward our objectives. Most importantly, we look forward to an increasingly diverse and inclusive University faculty, administrative staff, support staff, and student body.