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Recruitment and Retention of Culturally Diverse Faculty/Staff: Our Process for Success

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Recruitment and Retention of Culturally Diverse Faculty/Staff: Our Process for Success

Abstract

This presentation will highlight the very successful process followed at the University of Nebraska at Omaha for recruiting culturally diverse faculty and staff and further illustrates the joint ownership of this process by the Chancellor's Office as well as by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs office. The individual unit retention and assessment strategies will be shared with participants.

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The process, which ultimately led to the hiring of more culturally diverse faculty proportionally than any other university in the country last year (2000-2001) has obviously illustrated the success of the recruitment process at this metropolitan university. This presentation shares this successful process, the joint ownership of the process, documents shared during the search committee meetings, the process followed at search committee meetings and the power behind assessing the finalist list, all interwoven with the strategic plan of this metropolitan campus.

Also of importance in this campus' success is the culture change brought about by the Pathways to Harmony diversity training. This program includes diversity training for faculty, staff and students and has been successful in creating awareness for the dynamics of cross-cultural communication.

As part of the new hiring procedures for staff, administrators, managers, supervisors and faculty are consulted prior to advertising open positions. Recruitment designed to attract persons of color is discussed; applicant pools are monitored for inclusion of females and persons of color; and the legalities of successful interviews are discussed.

Essential initiatives for retention of culturally diverse faculty and staff will be offered. These strategies are in place during three phases: recruitment phase, relocation phase and mentoring phase. The recruitment phase includes such things as targeting advertising at conferences, which will be well attended by culturally diverse faculty. The recruitment phase includes initiatives such as scheduling formal and informal events to welcome new faculty. The mentoring phase offers strategies such as reviewing the strategic plan with all new faculty members illustrating our emphasis and commitment to inclusive environments and connections to the community.

An assessment process to monitor not only the hiring process, but also the retention of culturally diverse faculty and staff will also be discussed. This process currently contains the gathering of data from department chairs who share their particular strategies for welcoming new culturally diverse and female faculty. The mere fact that the Office of Academic Affairs asks department chairs what they do to welcome new faculty is key. Ultimately these "best practices" will be shared with subsequent search committees and with all departments through a "faculty/staff/students in transition" newsletter. Additionally the new culturally diverse faculty are interviewed individually by the Center for Faculty Development Director. While this officer reports to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, her office is outside of the administration building and is viewed as quite separate from reappointment/ tenure decisions. The responses from faculty will also be shared and are all remarkably positive. In fact, there was only one negative comment and it involved financial endeavors outside the scope of the units. Further, these comments are not an opportunity for us to rest on our laurels, but provided examples of success for other units to learn with and from.

Finally, these comments illustrate that while there is always room to enhance and buttress in-place strategies, this metropolitan campus is welcoming and inviting to culturally diverse faculty.

Presenters

Sharon Ulmar has over 20 years experience in civil rights and employment law with a focus of employment discrimination. She presently holds the position of Assistant to the Chancellor for Diversity and Equal Opportunity at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Prior to her employment at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, she was assistant director at the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission where she gained knowledge of civil rights laws. She holds a Master of Public Administration with an emphasis in Human Resources. Sharon conducts numerous training programs across campus as well as throughout the community.

Sheri Rogers is an Associate Professor of Literacy Education and the Assistant to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. She has published numerous articles and two books, as well as made over a hundred professional presentations. Sheri is also a member of a metropolitan board of education. Her responsibilities as Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs include visiting search committees with Sharon Ulmar to share the Vice Chancellor and Chancellor's charge and commitment to hire qualified women and culturally diverse candidates in keeping with this metropolitan university's strategic plan.