Princeton's Interim Diversity Report

Interim Report from the Diversity Working Group

"Diversifying our community continues to be of critical importance to the University. If we are to remain a preeminent institution, we must call upon the talents of gifted individuals from all backgrounds in our staff, as well as in our faculty and student body."
        — Shirley Tilghman

The United States has always been a country of immigrants, and its population continues to become ever more ethnically diverse. According to a recent Census Bureau report, Hispanics represented half of the population growth in the United States from July 2003 to July 2004. The population growth for Asians ran a close second. The Bureau estimates there are 41.3 million people of Hispanic descent, 37.7 million of Black or African descent and 14 million of Asian descent living in the United States. According to the 2000 census, 24.9% of the United States' overall population is from an ethnic minority background, and this percentage is expected to increase significantly in the years ahead. The University draws its staff, just as it draws its faculty and students, from the society it exists to serve. As that society continues to change, the University must also change, making sure that its policies and practices are effectively attracting and engaging not only students and faculty, but also a staff that appropriately reflects the diversity of talents and perspectives in the broader society. In so doing, the University advances its educational mission by enhancing both the formal and informal learning environment in which our students engage in their various, and often quite individual, Princeton experiences.

Princeton has recognized this challenge and has invested time and resources in diversifying its community. An important landmark in this effort was the issuance of a report authored by then-Vice Provost Ruth Simmons in 1993. In response to that report, Princeton implemented specific measures designed not only to recruit a more diverse student, faculty and staff population but also to foster a culture in which all could excel. These efforts have brought some dividends to Princeton. Using other Ivy League institutions as a comparison we have made progress in attracting and retaining paraprofessional and skilled trade staff of color. This is true even compared to more urban-based peers. On the other hand, we lag in executive and managerial ranks even as the pool of potential candidates of color has increased as measured by the University's affirmative action report. Of the 358 staff hires in calendar year 2004, 28% were members of minority groups. In the executive and professional ranks 31 of the 184 hires were members of a minority group (17 %) and in office support 19 of 73 (26%) were members of a minority group. Of the 61 janitorial and food service workers hired, 52 (85%) were members of a minority group. Promotion and retention activity did not help the University increase the percentages of minorities in administrative or executive positions. Human Resources records 20 promotions of staff of color last year among a total of 115 promotions or 17%, and 320 terminations/separations of which 97 or 30% were minorities. This level of hiring and retention activity has placed the University in the bottom half of its peer group with a similar percentage of managers of color to Harvard but below the University of Pennsylvania, MIT and Yale.

In the winter of 2004 President Tilghman asked a group of University staff (list attached) led by Executive Vice President Mark Burstein, Vice President for Campus Life Janet Smith Dickerson, and Associate Provost for Institutional Equity Terri Harris Reed to formulate a plan to expand and strengthen the University's efforts to diversify its staff. President Tilghman asked this

Diversity Working Group to ". . . identify proactive strategies and potential barriers that affect the recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of a diverse workforce here at Princeton… [As she explained,] the Dean of the Faculty, the College, and the Graduate School are working hard to increase and strengthen the diversity of our faculty and student body. This new committee, whose work is intended to complement those efforts, will focus its attention on issues related to staff at all levels."

The working group focused its initial efforts on learning from committee members and other members of the University community what they thought were the beliefs and behaviors that shape the Princeton experience and impede our ability to recruit and retain employees. The working group focused its efforts on employees of color although many of its ideas would work to increase other forms of diversity in Princeton's staff and improve the overall work environment for all employees. The working group and its committees have met eighteen times over the past seven months. In addition, we have consulted with faculty knowledgeable about race and culture, as well as with current staff and Princeton University alumni of color who have been in the vanguard of these efforts in other organizations. The group has identified and reviewed several policies and practices that appear to have a significant impact — intentional and unintentional — on Princeton's efforts to effectively recruit, manage and retain a diverse workforce. During the next academic year, we expect to continue our investigation through a complete review of our recruitment, hiring and retention data partially facilitated by the new Jobs @ Princeton software and to strengthen the working group's knowledge through further internal consultation with additional experts in the field, including discussions with successful diversity managers working in the private sector. This interim report, requested by the President, summarizes our initial thoughts and findings.

Our focus has been on three areas: how to increase the effectiveness of Princeton's commitment to and efforts regarding diversity; how to provide an environment where a diverse staff can thrive; and how to remove barriers that hinder the recruitment, hiring and retention of a diverse staff. We believe that many of the initiatives described below will have a positive impact on staff from all backgrounds, not just staff from minority backgrounds. This is a deliberate strategy that aims to have our entire community embrace a commitment to diversity, thereby increasing the likelihood not only that cultural change will occur at Princeton, but that it will be both systemic and institutionalized.

A. Increase the vigor and visibility of our commitment to diversity

Although increasing the diversity of staff as well as faculty and students at Princeton is a high priority for President Tilghman and her cabinet, the working group found that this goal is not widely understood across the campus. If Princeton is to realize its aspiration to become an institution that embraces and reaps the benefits of a more diverse community, its entire administration – and, indeed, the entire University community – must work diligently toward achieving a set of shared outcomes. Nevertheless, Princeton's administrators with specific diversity-related responsibilities, most prominently the Associate Provost for Institutional Equity, will inevitably provide leadership that is critical to the development and implementation of effective strategies, as well as to fostering a community ethos that embraces a strong commitment to greater diversity. Working group members were concerned that the press of day-to-day business leaves these key leaders with too little opportunity to design new diversity-

related initiatives or to increase awareness of Princeton's commitment to building and maintaining a diverse workforce. The working group believes the following three initiatives would significantly enhance the ability of Princeton leaders who are charged with specific diversity-related responsibilities to clarify expectations, create a shared sense of responsibility and address some of the myths and challenges associated with instilling respect for diversity as a defining characteristic of Princeton's culture.

1. **Increase University administrative capacity to develop and implement new initiatives that will build and maintain an environment that is welcoming, safe and respectful for** *all* **people.** The working group had many conversations about how to sustain focus on the University's overall diversity goals. The group observed that Princeton's peers generally have more staff devoted to diversity-related issues, and that some, including Brown, Cornell and Columbia, have specific offices devoted to coordinating their efforts at promoting diversity. On the other hand the working group was concerned that if our diversity efforts are associated too closely with any one office we will not appropriately convey the message that all offices have roles to play in helping to achieve these goals. The working group concluded that the University needed to augment senior leadership on this issue if we are to mobilize energies, marshal resources and lead collaborative efforts to develop a campus culture that embraces, understands and testifies to the importance of diversity at the University.

2. **Create a clear and consistent communication plan for this effort that invites, fosters and sustains dialogue about diversity at Princeton.** The University should create a clear and consistent communications plan that includes an expressed commitment to a diversity vision or mission, specific goals for broad engagement in efforts to increase diversity and improve the campus climate and specific tasks designed to promote achievement of the institution's diversity goals. Tasks could include the creation of a diversity website with electronic alerts/news, connected and interactive chat groups, and better use of existing communication vehicles such as publications, websites and mailings to communicate University goals in this area and highlight new and existing diversity programs. We believe that improved and expanded communication of the University's diversity goals would have a positive impact on Princeton's culture and would help increase the number of job seekers of color interested in working at the University.

3. **Facilitate coordination among efforts to increase the diversity of faculty, students, staff and contractors.** Many offices at the University are working hard to increase the diversity of our community. Much of this effort is neither widely publicized nor closely coordinated. The working group recognizes that the recruitment of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff poses different challenges, but the group believes that there may be opportunities for these various efforts to learn from and reinforce each other. The University should facilitate interaction and exchange of information among the multiple offices charged with leading the University's diversity efforts in these areas.

B. Create an environment where all can excel

One of the concerns identified by the working group is the extent to which members of the staff can find it difficult to feel that they belong at the University. Many staff of color shared

experiences which, although unintentional, led them to feel marginalized. This data is similar to information gathered by the Task Force on Health and Wellbeing. In a survey conducted by that task force in May of 2004 employees who had been at Princeton for three to five years were much less likely to describe their experience at the University as very or somewhat satisfying compared to employees with longer or shorter tenure. The working group believes that these issues must be addressed if we want to recruit and retain a diverse work force. The initiatives below could help create an environment where all members of the staff feel more fully connected to the University.

1. **Foster affinity groups for interested employees**. Affinity groups are voluntary, generally employee-driven, groups that are organized around shared interests or such characteristics as race, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. These groups can offer comfortable places to meet and programs of interest, as well as opportunities to get to know other members of the staff. The groups are intended to create opportunities to exchange ideas and to strengthen the linkage to and within diverse communities. In a recent study by the National Urban League, the authors note, "Companies typically use … affinity groups . . . to encourage ongoing involvement of employees in diversity and inclusion efforts" [Diversity Practices That Work: The American Worker Speaks. Available online at http://www.nul.org/Publications/PDF/ERAC-NUL.pdf – accessed 05 July 2005]. The study continues: "The company sponsors all of the [affinity groups] in part and assigns many an executive sponsor. The return on investment comes in the form of enhanced satisfaction of the participating members…and measurable improvements in employee retention" (p.33). The University currently has two staff affinity groups founded in the early 1990s: the Princetonians of Color Network and a Lesbian, Gay and Transgender group. The working group suggests that the University better support these groups, as well as others that may develop, with resources and executive sponsorship.

2. **Implement programs and activities that will make Princeton a more welcoming, pluralistic community.** It is clear to the working group that changing the culture of an institution only happens through sustained multi-faceted effort. The University needs to find ways to raise awareness about the benefits of diversity and to create a more welcoming community. The working group believes diversity objectives should be integrated into a more comprehensive employee and new manager orientation program being planned by Human Resources. The manager orientations, which should be provided frequently, should include discussions with senior managers about how they incorporate and monitor diversity efforts in their units. The working group also felt that the University should take a number of other steps that might include: becoming more deliberate and thoughtful about how we welcome new employees (e.g., an event at Opening Exercises each fall or creating unit-wide or individualized welcoming activities, especially for employees who are relocating or unfamiliar with the Princeton area); providing photos of Cabinet members and senior administrators on the University's website to enable new employees to recognize senior staff; and organizing campus-wide or unit-specific forums for staff related not only to diversity but also to other topics of interest.

3. **Develop and facilitate leadership opportunities for employees.** Princeton's relatively small size limits the number of leadership opportunities for employees, but these opportunities are essential for employees to grow and feel they contribute to the larger institution. The working group believes the University needs to create more opportunities for capable managers of color to contribute to the institution's overall success in meaningful ways and to enable entry level employees to grow professionally at the University. To accomplish these goals the working groups suggests three initial actions: assess the representation of staff of color on existing committees and enhance representation where needed; implement the next phase of *Excelling at Princeton*; and create a University leadership program. The working group felt *Excelling at Princeton* represents our most successful effort to improve the morale and sense of possibility among our lowest paid employees. The program is now focused on basic skill learning. We would like to see it broadened to impact directly the "professional" development of participants. The leadership program we have in mind is modeled on a program at the University of California at Berkley (see http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/ldp/ldp.htm). This program enrolls 25 managers from across the institution and asks them to undertake an institution-wide project. It provides the participants with development training on issues such as presentation skills, time management and employee management. To implement a similar project, we would draw participants from a cross-section of staff at Princeton, including staff of color. The University has successfully piloted a somewhat similar leadership program in OIT and has invested in other initiatives that were designed to bring together staff from across the University to address administrative challenges (e.g., the APT). The Berkeley program is more comprehensive and ambitious.

C. Enhance the pool of talented applicants of color

The University relies on managers in departments to make hiring decisions. This is a strength that the working group would like to support as opposed to moving toward a more centralized process. On the other hand, these managers are not at present succeeding in increasing the University's diversity. Of the 87 staff job groups analyzed in our most recent affirmative action plan, in 40 job groups minority employees were under represented given the determined availability of qualified potential employees. Unfortunately, the number of job groups in which minorities are under represented has increased 25% over the past two years. This change can be explained in part by demographic shifts in the available pool. The working group focused on efforts to increase hiring managers' knowledge of the University's diversity goals and to provide them with more tools to help them identify and attract more applicants of color.

1. **Systematically educate and assist managers who have significant hiring responsibilities, ensuring they appreciate the critical role they play in achieving the University's goal to increase staff diversity.** The working group believes that managers with significant hiring responsibilities should meet regularly for training on how to attract a diverse applicant pool, how to evaluate and interview a non-traditional candidate, and how to present Princeton from a range of perspectives. Hiring managers must have a clear understanding that the University's policy is to cast the widest possible net in order to procure the best and brightest talent. This effort should be focused less on complying with EEOC guidelines (although that obviously is important) and more on identifying

ways the University can support hiring managers' efforts more successfully in this regard. We need to give hiring managers more tools to bolster the University's diversity efforts including resources and relevant data about the availability of minority candidates. The hiring managers group could also serve as a mechanism for identifying and nurturing a pool of talented employees of color who are promising candidates for internal hiring or promotion opportunities.

2. **Provide more central support for hiring a diverse work force**. The Staffing Department within Human Resources has a number of ideas about how to support hiring managers in identifying a talented and diverse pool of candidates. These ideas include creating a handout and weblink to a Guide for Recruiting a Diverse Workforce for managers that includes local and national resources; interviewing all candidates who withdraw from searches to determine how the process might be improved; creating a database that links affirmative action data to the job requisition process; providing a list of staff available to answer candidate questions regarding work climate, location, services, and town resources among other issues; and providing information to all candidates regarding the University's mortgage program, its tuition assistance program and other benefits.

3. **Provide housing opportunities for our lowest paid employees**. 54% of the University's employees of color are in the bi-weekly ranks. To better recruit and retain one of the most diverse segments of our population, the working group believes a new mortgage program targeted at our lowest paid employees should be developed to provide them with homeownership opportunities within the local real estate market. This program could be modeled on ones already provided by Yale, the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia.

One benefit of the working group's deliberation has been the education it has provided to its members as we have discussed ways of expanding diversity and changing the culture at Princeton. Many additional ideas have been mentioned to support the three goals of increasing the vigor and visibility of our commitment to diversity, creating an environment where all can excel and enhancing the pool of talented applicants of color. Over the next year we expect to continue to explore ways to use data to further evaluate the success of the University's efforts to recruit and retain staff of color and to assess the climate at the University through surveys and focus groups. We also want to explore ways to reinforce the University's efforts to increase diversity through our strategic planning, manager evaluation and merit increase processes. Finally, we expect to work closely with the Learning and Development Department in Human Resources to create more programs to make Princeton a more supportive workplace for *all* members of the staff, with a particular sensitivity to needs of those individuals underrepresented in our community, and to better support employees' growth and development, perhaps through a mentoring program or other initiatives. Ideas developed through this continued investigation will be included in our final report.

It is clear to the working group that accomplishing our goal of increased diversity at Princeton is a long term project. Progress depends on diligence and the ability to take immediate tangible steps that will result in change now and in the future.