

# **ACHIEVING A DIVERSE FACULTY AT RIT**

**Presented by**

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**at**

**RIT Diversity Day  
RIT Inn and Conference Center**

**March 25, 2002**

## **THANK YOU**

Today is a “Red Letter” day in RIT’s commitment to diversity. The ideas and strategies that will evolve throughout the day will serve as an engine for continuing efforts and accomplishments as RIT pursues its goal of achieving a thrivingly diverse campus.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our presenters, panelists, workshop chairs, facilitators, and notetakers; representatives of the faculty, staff, and student governance groups; vice presidents, deans, directors, managers, and department chairs; and, most importantly, faculty search committee chairs.

Finally, I want to express special appreciation to the RIT Board of Trustees for sponsoring this conference and to individual trustees who are attending and participating directly.

## **FOCUS OF THE CONFERENCE**

This conference is focused on achieving a breakthrough in the recruiting of faculty of African American, Latino American, and Native American (AALANA) ancestries. While we focus today on faculty, the campus continues to work hard on the recruiting of students and staff of diverse backgrounds. While we focus today on AALANA faculty, the campus remains committed to a broad definition of diversity which includes other racial and ethnic groups, gender, deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, individuals with physical challenges, and individuals of various sexual orientations.

Finally, note that a focus on faculty recruiting must also include a full discussion of the related issues of retention and of a supportive/encouraging environment and climate.

## **DO WE NEED THIS CONFERENCE?**

In my judgment, we need this conference for at least four reasons.

### **RIT’s Mission**

First, all of our students – majority and minority – will enjoy a higher quality educational experience and be better prepared for successful careers and lives if RIT is more diverse and inclusive. Our corporate and government partners, who hire our graduates, and society as a whole, will benefit as well. Diversity is clearly an important component of RIT’s mission.

### **Weak Recruiting**

Second, our recruiting of minority faculty has been weak over time. Last year, in particular, when we hired 125 faculty, our performance was especially disappointing.

Over the next five years, 50% of our faculty will be eligible for retirement. We need to prepare now so we do not waste this opportunity.

### **Request for Help**

Third, since September 2001, I have had candid and rigorous discussions with the campus community, pointing, in particular, to last year's faculty recruiting result. The venues for these discussions have included a campus town meeting, the Commission for Promoting Pluralism, Institute Council, Academic Senate, Staff Council, Student Government, Council of Deans, Administrative Council (vice presidents and other direct reports), and trustees. The Provost has had similar discussions with deans and faculty.

In my meetings with faculty and academic administrators, a common theme has emerged: "We believe in diversity. We want to further diversity in our recruiting. We have tried and not succeeded. Help us."

I have responded to this request for help in two ways. First, I created the position of Manager for Faculty Recruiting, reporting to the Director of Human Resources. After a national recruiting effort, Renee Baker was hired. She started on March 1, 2002. I know she will be of immense help in this effort.

Second, I asked the RIT Board of Trustees for help. This conference, under their sponsorship, is one response to my request. Their counsel and direct assistance on a continuing basis is an additional response. As you can see, there is significant trustee involvement in both the morning and afternoon sessions today.

### **Nation's Health and Values**

A fourth reason for having this conference relates to the nation's health and values, as these are affected by the nation's changing demographics. For example (the following statistics are taken from Business-Higher Education Forum, *Investing in People: Developing All of America's Talent on Campus and in the Work Place*, American Council on Education, Washington, DC 2002):

- The U.S. population grew in absolute numbers more in the last decade than in any previous decade.
- During this decade:
  - the minority population grew by 35%;
  - the non-Hispanic white population grew by 3.4%;
  - Hispanics increased 58%;
  - Asian-Americans increased 50%;
  - African-Americans increased 16%.
- By 2050:
  - the non-Hispanic white population will fall to 53% of the total population.

- By 2015, the traditional college-age population:
  - will grow by 16%;
  - of these new students, 80% will be non-white and nearly 50% will be Hispanic.
- In 2000, the proportion of college-age students who completed a bachelor's degree was:
  - 28% for non-Hispanic whites;
  - 17% for African Americans;
  - 11% for Hispanics.

This demographic data tells us that a significant and increasing share of the total U.S. population will be represented by the AALANA population, and that this population is at present significantly underrepresented in the college-completion population. The quality and preservation of economic, social, and civic life for all Americans depend on the access to and quality of higher education for all Americans. It is in the interest of everyone here today, and those who will come after us, to have a society which is diverse, inclusive, and welcoming to everyone.

### **RIT's Challenge**

RIT must step up and do its part. As a university, we start with and are all about our students. To attract and graduate AALANA students, we need an appropriate number of AALANA faculty to serve as mentors and role models.

### **PAST ACTIONS TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY**

Over the past several years, there has been a good deal of rhetoric in support of diversity. In particular, in two of these years my opening day address to the campus focused on the value and importance of diversity. After almost two years of campus-wide discussion and debate, we adopted a comprehensive policy extolling the benefits of diversity and establishing a process and procedures for identifying and correcting discrimination and harassment related to anti-diversity behavior.

Organizationally, we established the Commission for Promoting Pluralism, the Center for Student Transition and Support, the North Star Center for Academic and Cultural Excellence, the Women's Resource Center, and the position and Office of the Assistant Provost for Diversity.

A few years ago our Associate Provost chaired a diversity task force. That task force worked hard for a year. Among its recommendations were a "grow your own" strategy and an "opportunity hires" policy (which means if an outstanding AALANA faculty member is available then we would hire him or her even if no position is currently open in the department). These recommendations have been implemented on a limited basis.

In October 2001, a new task force report on the recruitment and retention of AALANA faculty and staff was completed and discussed widely on campus. The co-chairs of this task force are the Chair of the Commission for Promoting Pluralism, the Assistant Provost for Diversity, and the Director of Human Resources. The Task Force's 13 recommendations are being implemented at this time.

Each year for a number of years RIT has invited community leaders who have a minority background to spend a year on the campus, on a part-time basis, as our Minett Professor. The Minett Professor presents public lectures, offers a class, and consults with students, faculty, and staff. Two past Minett Professors – Mary Francis Winters and Maurice Holmes – and our current Minett Professor – Essie Calhoun – are an integral part of our program today.

Each year we present numerous programs on diversity, sponsored by the Commission for Promoting Pluralism, the Office of Human Resources, and other groups. This year the Office of Human Resources offers throughout the year a Management Development Program on Diversity.

Over a million dollars are expended each year to support the programs I have just mentioned. I think it is fair to say, everything considered, that RIT clearly has “good intentions” relating to the enhancement of diversity on the campus.

But good intentions are one thing and results are another. What are the results to date? In my judgment, they have been disappointing and, especially last year, unacceptable. And that is why we are gathered here today.

## **THIS YEAR?**

### **Stringent Focus**

This year we have adopted a stringent focus to the challenge of diversity. I commented earlier on the vigorous and rigorous discussions I have had with various individuals and groups on campus. Three specific actions have been implemented as a consequence of these discussions.

First, it now is required that I personally sign off before an offer can be extended to a faculty candidate. Before signing off, I examine the recruiting process, the number of AALANA faculty candidates identified and visiting the campus, and the number of offers extended to and accepted by AALANA faculty candidates.

There is no “quota”, but I require a plan to show the number of new AALANA and other faculty that are expected to be on board by the end of the recruiting cycle, with benchmarks for progress as the recruiting process moves forward. My sign-off occurs only as

benchmark progress is achieved or exceeded. The Provost maintains an up-to-the-minute “score card” which shows by college and diversity attributes the status of open positions, offers made, and offers accepted.

A second action undertaken is the hiring, after a national search, of a Manager of Faculty Recruiting. This new position reports directly to the Director of Human Resources and works closely with every faculty search committee. Renee Baker holds this position. She joined RIT on March 1, 2002.

A third action we have taken is the organization of today’s program under the sponsorship of the RIT Board of Trustees.

## **Results**

The results of AALANA faculty recruiting so far this year are phenomenally successful. Frankly, they have exceeded my highest expectations. I could not be happier with or prouder of the efforts made and results achieved so far this year. The Provost, deans, department heads, and faculty search committee chairs, in particular, are to be warmly and enthusiastically congratulated.

The following tabulation shows the results since October 2001 by college:

<u>College</u>	<u>Offers</u>			<u>Acceptances</u>			<u>Nat'l Pool(%)</u>
	<u>Total</u>	<u>AAL</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>AAL</u>	<u>%</u>	
<b>CAST</b>	2	2	100	2	1	50	5.4
<b>COB</b>	8	3	38	4	2	50	5.4
<b>GCCIS</b>	8	2	25	6	2	33	2.9
<b>GCOE</b>	3	1	33	3	1	33	5.4
<b>CIAS</b>	0	0	---	0	0	---	6.7
<b>COLA</b>	22	6	27	12	4	33	11.2
<b>NTID</b>	0	0	---	0	0	---	6.4
<b>COS</b>	4	2	50	1	1	100	6.1
<b>Total</b>	47	16	34	28	11	39	6.4

Of the 47 offers made, 34% were extended to AALANA faculty candidates. Of the 28 acceptances to date, 39% are acceptances by AALANA faculty candidates. As the last column in the tabulation shows, the 39% acceptance rate is six times the proportion of AALANA faculty in the national pool. Each college that has extended offers (six of our eight colleges) has achieved acceptance rates significantly in excess of the proportion of AALANA faculty in the national pools in their disciplines. Moreover, we are very confident that two additional offers to AALANA faculty candidates will be accepted very shortly. Of the 11 AALANA faculty acceptances, four are African American, five are Latino American, and two are Native American.

As a side – but extremely important – comment, the representation of women faculty at RIT is also much lower (29% of the total) than we would prefer. We are addressing that as well. So far this year, 55% of the offers extended have been made to women candidates, and 43% of the acceptances have been by women candidates.

How do we account for these resoundingly outstanding results? The answer lies in the attention and focus that have been placed on this issue by the entire campus. It lies in the dedication, hard work, and creativity of the individuals closely aligned to the recruiting process. It represents the willingness to assume responsibility and to be accountable for the outcome. It represents the utilization of the diversity infrastructure established in prior years. It represents a “can do” attitude and a full recognition and acceptance of the challenge.

## **TODAY’S OBJECTIVES**

From the preceding discussion comes a framing of the objectives of this conference. Specifically, we want to:

- Broaden our perspective.
- Learn from others.
- Solidify and accelerate the current momentum.
- Identify new approaches and allegiances.
- Establish a process for success that will continue on a regular basis into the future.

I shall speak to the last point more in my concluding remarks at the end of the day. To anticipate those remarks, let me say now that:

- I will be asking the workshop groups to stay together as a task force over the next year and to meet regularly to discuss strategy and implementation and to monitor progress.
- I will be asking taskforce members, in consort with their dean or department head, to organize and lead strategy sessions in their own college and area, receiving input along the way.

- Videotapes of this morning's sessions will be available for use in this afternoon's workshops and in the work of the task forces.
- A bimonthly update on diversity will be provided at Institute Council meetings over the next year.
- Updates on diversity will be provided at each Board of Trustees meeting over the coming year.

## **THANK YOU**

Let me end these remarks where I began: thank you all for your participation today, and thank you for your understanding, commitment, support, and, especially, for this year's outstanding faculty recruiting record to date.

Thank you Karen Barrows, Alfreda Brown, Essie Calhoun, Joyce Hertzog, Polly Reeder, Fred Smith, and Patty Spinelli for your work in planning, orchestrating, and operationalizing the Day.

Thank you Clay Osborne, May Snowden, and Mary-Frances Winters for your counseling throughout the planning phases, for facilitating the workshops, and for giving up a day in your life for RIT.