

## Regis University Office of Diversity

### Strategic Plan for an Inclusive Community

***To be a true community, college and university leaders must engage in multifaceted planning and programming that involves learning in and out of the classroom. This effort requires involvement and investment from all members of the faculty, staff and administration and a careful understanding and sensitivity to the needs of all students. In short, all campus community members need to work together.***

***-Statement of the Anti-Defamation League***

### Introduction

Regis University's Community Diversity Advisory Board outlined key areas for a strategic plan to increase diversity and become a more inclusive community:

1. Campus Climate – Foster a learning environment characterized by respect and understanding that celebrates the gifts of everyone.
2. Curriculum – Create a curriculum and pedagogy responsive to a multicultural world and a diverse student body.
3. Recruitment and Retention – Increase and then maintain the diversity of students, faculty and staff through recruitment, retention and professional development efforts
4. Community Connections – Build relationships between Regis and the Denver community especially the immediate neighborhood.
5. Management – Demonstrate the University's commitment to enhancing diversity.

In 2005-2006, the Office of Diversity completed a strategic planning process that defined the scope and dimensions of diversity work in these five areas. A needs assessment, including a written survey, focus groups, and individual interviews clarified specific objectives in each area. This plan reflects the results of that assessment process.

### Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Strategic Plan for an Inclusive Community is to expand upon the University's diversity initiatives with specific goals and objectives in order to lay a firm foundation for the University's continuing evolution as a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive environment for all who learn, work, and live at Regis University. (Note: Work on aspects of this plan are well underway. A status report for 2007 will document progress to date.)

## Background and Assumptions

Diversity of learners and teachers is an academic asset. At Regis University, the diversity of students, faculty, and staff can bring a richness to learning and teaching that surpasses what can be experienced and learned in a homogeneous environment. However, enrolling a diverse student body does not guarantee that the intellectual and cultural life of the University will be enriched. The differences in background, perspective, and culture that members of a diverse community can contribute are enriching only if they are acknowledged, welcomed, and explored. Too often, efforts are focused on helping underrepresented students “fit in.” This plan focuses on creating a campus environment in which people’s differences are recognized and welcomed as positive contributions.

Prior experience creates differences. Students and faculty who bring to the classroom a broad diversity of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, race and ethnicity, religious belief and practice, gender orientation, and abilities experience the world differently. Experience shapes the thought, feelings, and behavior of individuals. A diverse mix of participants brings an equally diverse mix of experience and thought to any topic.

Exploring differences expands thinking. To explore differences in thought, perspective, and attitude by speaking honestly and listening deeply leads to the beginning of understanding and respect that is at the heart of multicultural learning and living. It is a rich source of learning if we invite it and nurture it.

## Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives presented here are aimed at creating an environment in which all members of this learning community will gain knowledge and understanding and practice the sophisticated intercultural skills that will enable them to succeed in a diverse society, locally and globally.

The Strategic Plan for an Inclusive Community:

- Promotes institutional change in five areas: behavior, policy, attitudes, practices, and climate
- Promotes activities and policies designed to achieve and express desired changes
- Reflects the needs and values of community members
- Depends upon the active involvement of community members to implement it

## Campus Climate

Goal: To foster a learning environment characterized by respect and understanding that celebrates the gifts of everyone

Rationale: Climate does not simply occur, but is shaped by internal as well as external forces. These forces include the history of the University with respect to inclusivity, structural diversity (numerical representation of diverse groups), psychological climate (sense of

welcome and inclusion among all groups), and behavioral climate (how members of the University community treat each other).

Objective 1: Collect data on a consistent, ongoing basis to provide accurate information, assess needs, and implement plans to meet those needs.

- Develop a climate assessment instrument to assess student, faculty, staff, and management perceptions and attitudes with respect to university community diversity and climate.
- Collect demographic information, retention and graduation rates and employee retention.
- Obtain regular feedback about the experiences of diverse members of the University community directly affected by issues that arise concerning the climate for diversity.

Objective 2: Establish benchmarks to measure improvement in climate.

Objective 3: Support and empower members of underrepresented groups

- Organize activities to welcome new students and celebrate graduation for departing seniors.
- Support affinity groups to foster student leadership and empowerment.
- Provide retreats for students and for faculty and staff of color.
- Offer workshops and programs for Residence Hall staff and students
- Provide opportunities to celebrate diversity within the Regis community.

Objective 4: Strengthen and promote increased involvement of affinity groups, affirming identity as a prerequisite for building community.

- Encourage formation and of affinity groups among Regis College students and support their activities.
- Encourage formation of faculty/staff affinity groups and support their activities.
- Provide opportunities to share perspectives within affinity groups and with the broader community.
- Encourage affinity groups to take leadership in providing programming for the University community.

Objective 5: Provide opportunities for interaction and dialogue to allow people of different backgrounds and perspectives to learn about and from one another

- Initiate and conduct a series of Diversity Dialogues to explore perspectives, experiences, and issues.
- Develop and initiate an annual Diversity Day Conference to explore and disseminate best practices in diversity education.

Objective 6: Provide education and development for faculty, staff, and students to increase awareness and knowledge about the similarities and differences among those who comprise our community, and to develop skill in working productively across “lines of difference.”

- Offer workshops and courses to faculty, staff, and student groups.
- Create a group of Diversity Facilitators to assist in providing in-service training to departments and units of the University.
- Initiate invitations and support departments in bringing diverse speakers to the University.
- Provide in-service training in cooperation with the Human Resources Department.

- Develop and initiate an annual Diversity Day Conference to explore and disseminate best practices in diversity education.

### Curriculum and Pedagogy

Goal: To provide a curriculum that intentionally includes the experiences of diverse people in the U.S., examines and analyzes theories of human difference, analyzes structures of inequality (historical and contemporary) and examines their impact, and prepares students to participate effectively in diverse communities and workplaces.

Objective 1: Review and enhance curriculum content

- Support curriculum enhancements dealing explicitly with social and cultural diversity, and constructive interaction among students of diverse backgrounds.
- Assist curriculum committees in each College to examine existing courses and recommend specialized courses in aspects and dimensions of diversity.
- Provide resources and support activities for faculty to assist them in integrating diverse perspectives within the curriculum.
- Provide sessions and talks in classes which encourage student learning about issues of diversity and human difference

Objective 2: Encourage and support the use of pedagogical techniques that encourage interaction and application of multicultural learning

- Offer faculty development opportunities to encourage methods of teaching responsive to a multicultural world and to a diverse student body.

### Recruitment and Retention

Goal: Increase and maintain the diversity of students, faculty, staff and administrators through recruitment, retention and professional development efforts

Rationale: Diversity addresses many dimensions of difference other than race and ethnicity, although we tend to focus on these because statistical information on these particular dimensions is most accessible. A crucial component in creating an environment that is welcoming to people of color is increased enrollment of students of color and increased representation of people of color in faculty, staff and administrative positions.

Objective 1: Recognizing that Native American, African American and Asian American are currently most underrepresented and that Latino/Hispanic represent a very important local demographic population, increase enrollment of students of color to 20% of overall enrollments.

- Hire an additional professional recruiter/counselor position in Regis College who will have a particular focus on recruiting students of color
- Establish attainable goals for minority enrollment in each College.
- Participate in minority recruitment efforts locally and nationally.

- Develop programming to increase interest among ethnic minority students in post-secondary education, introduce them to Regis University, and provide information and guidance in the application process (campus visitation days, summer programs, etc.).
- Increase need-based financial aid for all students with increased outreach to students of color and those living in targeted geographic areas.

Objective 2: Increase retention of students of color to a level which is at least comparable to that of the overall student body

- Gather and report data on retention of students of color.
- Appoint a working group to investigate strategies to retain students of color (including academic support and motivation as necessary).
- Provide student support services geared to retaining students of color, with particular emphasis on Regis College.

Objective 3: Increase the pool of candidates for every employee position to include ethnic minority candidates, with the goal of employing faculty, staff, and administrators of color proportionate to student enrollment (20%).

- Appoint a working group to investigate issues involved in hiring minority faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Develop a *Guide to Hiring for Diversity* for use in the search process, including interview questions focused on diversity.
- Allocate funding to advertise in publications widely read by underrepresented groups.
- Explore recruitment strategies that are not dependent upon University funding.

Objective 4: Retain a diverse cadre of faculty, staff, and administrators at 20% of total employment in each category

- Encourage and provide funding for professional development of faculty, staff, and administrators concerning issues relating to diversity.
- Organize activities to welcome new faculty, staff, and administrators to the University.
- Provide mentoring opportunities for new employees of color.
- Develop a clear and consistent message that faculty diversity is an institutional priority and that efforts to create and maintain an inclusive campus community include faculty, staff, and administrators as well as students.
- Conduct a study to investigate the relationship between departmental and University climate and employee retention.

### Community Connections

Goal: To build relationships between Regis University and the Denver community, especially the immediate neighborhood.

Objective 1: Develop programming to increase interest among ethnic minority students in post-secondary education, introduce them to Regis, and provide information and guidance in the application process (campus visitation days, summer programs, etc.)

- Develop a campus visitation program with priority given to students at North High School and neighborhood elementary schools.
- Support and participate in programs that bring ethnic minority students to campus, including INROADS, the Daniels Fund, and others.

### Management

Goal: To demonstrate the University's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment through policies and practices that focus on institutional change and institutionalize diversity as a strength of our community

Objective 1: To increase visibility and awareness of diversity initiatives within and outside Regis University

- Develop an image of diversity at Regis University that is innovative and captures the attention and imagination of the University community
- Announce and disseminate the *Strategic Plan for an Inclusive Community* to the Regis community

Objective 2: Establish accountability measures for administrators responsible for establishing and reaching diversity goals in their areas

Objective 3: Institutionalize sustainable support for diversity initiatives

- Revise the duties and title of the Associate to the Provost for Diversity to reflect the responsibilities of the position
- Provide base budget funding for programs and activities of the Office of Diversity
- Staff and fund the Office of Diversity to meet growing needs as goals are met and the campus becomes more diverse, the issues become more complex, and the need for retention and support programs increase

Objective 4: Disseminate a strong institutional stand against discrimination and intolerance embodied in a statement that demonstrates the University's commitment to an inclusive environment that challenges acts of intolerance and does not allow them to prevail.

Objective 5: Provide information about formal grievance process and procedures to report and investigate allegations of discrimination.