

Diversity Action Planning Comments

The following comments were received about the diversity action plan via e-mail or the web from November 2006 to February 2007. These comments were given in reaction to the initial draft of the diversity action plan that was disseminated to the campus. Many of these comments have been incorporated in the newest draft of the campus diversity action plan.

As a long time OSU employee, supervisor, and hiring official, I have one specific issue which bothers me deeply. I understand and appreciate all the good reasons for making a commitment to diversity. In the process of doing this, and with the very best intentions, we have turned our backs on veterans, and disabled veterans in our hiring processes at OSU. Military veterans, like our society, are becoming a much more diverse group, with increasing numbers of women and minorities serving our country and making significant sacrifices. Our diversity hiring rules require reasons for not interviewing, and not selecting women and minorities. Veterans, and even more importantly, disabled veterans can be overlooked with no explanation or consideration required. To the best of my knowledge we don't give, ask, or even consider these factors in our hiring. Let's not perpetuate this oversight as we move forward with a renewed commitment to diversity, unless we want to confirm that we don't value them as a group and we don't feel they bring diversity to our community.

I don't have a problem with diversity or defining diversity, and indeed I think a general discussion and awareness campaign at OSU is useful and needed. But this is supposed to be an action plan. I can't find any real ACTIONS in the plan just talk. I think with diversity all that is needed is more talk and communication that it is a priority. For OSU to invest financial and human resources in a document that doesn't say anything is wasteful. Even more wasteful is relying on one person to execute a very vague "action" plan that leaves much to interpretation. Further, what does the office of community and diversity really do? Is it a wise investment? Why are we investing so much in these people when we're talking about removing other people (instructors) from the classroom?

its a great concept, however, i am tired of administrators ramming ideas down to the faculty and not providing any additional support to make anything happen. i suggest that admin quit trying to invent jobs for itself, cut out a lot of its own expenses and use the funds it saves to do something useful.

Why does diversity always mean, accepting everyone and their cultures etc... unless you are against the liberal agenda? As a conservative I see that my views are not accepted, are not embraced, and made fun of in classes that I have taken, and in meetings that I have attended including ones put on by Dr. Ross. As Rush Limbaugh once said, "the left believes in freedom of speech, as long as they can control the freedom and the speech."

While the overarching concepts in this Diversity Action Plan are good, the fantasy "vision" statement at the beginning denies credibility to the whole endeavor. There are far too many "fluffy" statements in this paper to have it taken seriously. Please make it real!

(1) Is the Vision Statement feasible in 2016? Most certainly not. Can we change the Vision to a realistic goal that does give hope of success so that we do not discourage people by suggesting an impossible goal? The current version does not give me confidence in the leaders responsible for the change. If the Vision for 2016 is different, then the steps will be different. How about one in which the entire campus is engaged in implementing and participating in Diversity Action Plans that became a model for the entire nation. Particularly visionary was the implementation of widely accepted accountability and action plan.

(2) The philosophy statement

"Diversity at Oregon State University enhances education for the entire OSU community. It fosters multiple ways of understanding the curricula, including the study of society." does not recognize OSU's research, extension and teaching excellence in science, engineering, environment, etc. in addition to the study of society.

Shouldn't we say something about the wonderful new ways that the OSU curricula could acknowledge the science, engineering, environment views, etc. contributions of all people to society in the past and in the future?

(3) Another large use is the lack of focus on retention issues. The document states with great excellence that:

"OSU must determine to whom we apply our recruitment energies. Where that energy goes is an implicit and explicit display of values."

All that energy will not be effectively used if the campus environment as well as the external environment issues are addressed.

(4) The current tragic situation outside the USA (government breakdown in Iraq, failure of the war on drugs in Colombia, starvation and violence in Africa, nuclear proliferation in Asia, etc.) are all issues that require an international experience for OSU staff and students. Just as an example, how can we prepare ROTC officers if we don't provide them with the opportunity to interact with a diversity of students from all over the world. The document contains just one sentence on international students and is out of context from the rest of the document.

In summary, the document is a great starting point but needs further work.

Terryl,

First, I want to compliment the time and effort you have clearly put in to making OSU an inclusive campus. I have heard nothing but good from those who have met you and heard your vision for OSU.

I know the question posed to the community to comment on diversity was more about the specific text of the draft language, and presumably the goals and direction have already been decided. But, I wanted to take this opportunity to comment on my division in thinking in the overall area of OSU's direction in regards to diversity.

One part of me recognized that the process and culture for a young adult coming from the background of two parents with college degrees makes it more probable that their children will go onto college. The process is easier just because there is a family history, culture, emphasis, and knowledge in dealing with the education system. By reaching out to traditionally underrepresented groups you can, in effect, help break the status quo of what has historically happened and make a college education more accessible to everyone.

The other part of me sees that college entrance seems to be more about what ethnicity and culture you come from than did you achieve the requirements for entrance. And, I worry about the consequences of so much focus on the minority and the diversity that instead of making those differences matter less, the focus splinters the groups and makes those differences the focus of who you are. When do we decide that race or ethnicity is no longer discriminated against: when we recognize the problems and create diversity programs for each group, or when we no longer see or judge on the basis of race or ethnicity and have no fragmented group to campaign for their special rights? Do we need these programs for 10 more years or 100 more years? Where does it end, and everyone melt into one humanity? When your test score is all that counts?

As a white Christian, sometimes I see special protections and privileges given other groups, while the discrimination becomes reversed and the other side must become afraid to be what they are. And, it makes me afraid to say I do not believe in special privileges because I might be accused as the one that created the need for those privileges, which is part of another stereotype. But, as a Christian, considered culturally a majority and thus unprotected group, I must say that on a university campus and in the Oregon culture, I feel very much the minority.

But, this is just a philosophical thought debated on almost a daily basis. And, I recognize OSU is working hard in the best way they know how to make everyone feel welcome and included.

My second concern is budget. I am not sure how the diversity programs are funded. But, I see the current OSU budget crisis and the cuts to personnel and classes that have resulted in our current budget climate. I feel as if the quality of education at OSU is threatened, and everywhere I can see the effects of our recent budget woes. But, while I see writing and other basic classes cancelled for lack of funds to pay instruction and additional sections, I see diversity programs flourish. I am not saying these programs are in and of themselves are bad, I don't know them well enough to judge. But, I feel that when all is stripped away our mission is education. To teach. And to pay our employees who do so, and support those that do so, a right wage.

Everything else is superfluous. And, so I must question when diversity programs multiply and classes are eliminated. From this vantage point it almost seems these programs that are outside the colleges are being fed while the colleges are starving.

I know the direction and allocation of resources for OSU is a top level decision, but as I said earlier, I wanted to make these thoughts while I had the opportunity to do so.

Thank you for your patience, consideration, and time.

Wishing you all the best.

The diversity action plan is not a plan so much as a outline. Unlike the requests made of College's for detailed DAPs, there are no metrics included. How we create measures that ensure recruitment and retention of underrepresented populations is the crux of the matter. Without details on HOW, this is a lovely statement of a diverse future OSU utopia without any hope of success. When will the first comprehensive OSU report on diversity be issued? To whom will we compare ourselves? Where is on-going assessment in the plan?

Finally, although this is a separate matter, it is a bit related. Do we have to call them "Difference, Power and Discrimination" courses? Can't we have a more positive moniker such as "Difference, Respect and Inclusion" courses?

The vision for the plan feels too ethereal and dreamlike for me to buy into. I think a powerful statement about what is possible is in order but I am concerned that campus staff and faculty will

not buy into or believe in the vision as written. I think the scope of the vision has too many elements that are outside our control. This is a transformative vision but it can only "live" if it is believed in.

I'm confused by the Diversity Philosophy statement. What is the "academic achievement scholarship initiative?" This section is very student focused (which I like very much) but it seems to omit faculty and staff.

I like the imperative for Diversity section. OSU needs to pay attention to this.

Goal three may be troublesome in terms of recruiting from community colleges. The Degree Partnerships do not have broad campus support at this time.

In general, I think the goals are very strong. They are written in such a way that colleges, departments and units can (hopefully) translate them into concrete actions.

It seems to me that the OSU Campus Diversity Action Plan is very comprehensive. The following listed categories effectively explain OSU's commitment to diversity: Vision Mission, Diversity Philosophy Statement, Imperative for Diversity, and Critical Success Factors. The five goals provide the proper actions for the diversity plan to be effective. Sorry, I know this is late. I wrote up my feedback and then didn't submit it in time, but I thought I would send it in just in case.

VISION

I thought it might be good to add "and maintain" after "come together to create educational opportunities" in paragraph two. Also, in paragraph two, I thought that OSU should use emerging technologies to facilitate learning for non-traditional learners AND others (facilitating learning for everyone). I think the word choice of "quicken" in the sentence that begins "Economic development quickened" sounds awkward and may need to be replaced (perhaps with the word "increased"?)

DIVERSITY PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

In the Diversity Philosophy Statement, I was surprised to not see anything about collaboration or being collaborative directly stated, especially under "Requisites for successful diversity at OSU."

I liked the phrase "we also choose to work actively and consistently to nurture and support the full range of human diversity in our midst"--strong wording that accurately describes the vision, I think. I thought after "working together to nurture shared values" that the clarification "of diversity" may need to be added. If OSU shared or desired to share ALL values, we would be a less diverse place.

I found the paragraph/sentence that begins "The characteristics of diversity necessary to achieve OSU's educational goals" to be awkwardly constructed (especially in the last phrase "first generation to attend college"). I wonder at the use of the word disability and wonder if we shouldn't change it to abilities or differing abilities.

IMPERATIVE FOR DIVERSITY

"arrives at a balance between inclusivity and action" --> What does this mean? It isn't transparent to me.

Again, I'm surprised at no mention of collaboration.

"stakeholders" --> I realize what this is supposed to mean, but I'm not sure it would be transparent to everyone. It might be better to define/list all stakeholders.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

#4 Effective Partnerships

Finally! Check--collaboration is very important in this endeavor.

Goal 1

How are we to reach everyone? No specifics.

In general: We need something in the plan about helping nontraditional students (don't see anything in the goal).

GOAL 5

I can't tell if these classes are mandatory or not.

I have read your Action Plan with great interest. I have a few changes to suggest. It seems to me that in the "Vision" part of the statement, since these things have not yet been accomplished, it would be better to use the future tense. This would entail, in line 1, changing "is celebrating" to "will celebrate". In line 8, "OSU has" will become, "OSU will have". In line 9, "OSU used" will be "OSU will use" In line 12,, it will become "will quicken development"; line 13 will become "will truly make OSU a learning community"; in line 14, "OSU will become a destination of choice" and in line 16,, "all eyes will be on Oregon State University" Then, in the last line on page 1, I suggest deleting "furthering the educational goals of", putting a colon after "and students' On page 3 of the draft, under Oregon State University Strategic Plan, line 4, "of" should read "in" before "all of Oregon's colleges for qualified students". In the next paragraph, University Leadership Priority,, line 4, I am not sure what is meant by "metrics". Could this be expressed in some other way? That's all. The rest of the draft looks good and I commend you on a great statement. Sincerely, Jim Oldfield. Emeritus Animal Sciences.

Hi Terry,

I think the plan is good. The educational objectives of the plan will give students skills (understanding of the global context, respect for other cultures, creativity, new points of view, etc) that are vital for them in the 21st century workplace. –They have to know this stuff, and I think Oregon and the nation need them to know this stuff. It will make our students better citizens of the US and the world. 'Diversity' (in the largest sense of the word) doesn't stop at the border. (That might be a point to add in the plan). We live in a post 9-11 world, and we need these better citizens.

I did have one question in terms of time line... Am I to assume from the opening paragraph that (ideally) all actions are to be completed and all goals reached by 2016?

Terry and Sabah,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the diversity action plan for OSU. On page 2 of the action plan where the characteristics of diversity necessary to achieve OSU's educational goals are listed, I recommend that religion/faith also be listed here. College is a time when students evaluate many things about themselves and their lives. Religion/faith is one of those things and an aspect that we must not leave out. In the bigger picture of life it holds as much weight (if not more) as the other things that are listed here. We have a great and diverse religious advisory association on campus. They seem like a great place to get some input from. This action plan seems to be very well thought out and appears to have been done with much attention to detail. It strikes me as odd that sexual orientation is listed but religion/faith somehow got left out. If we

leave religion and faith out of this big plan it would appear to me that we are missing a very important and obvious link to successful living.

Thank you for your time.

Hi Terry,

A quick note to let you know I read through the Diversity Action.

It's a compelling document in terms of its content and structure. I have no suggestions for changes.

Well done!

Thanks,

Hello Terry:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft OSU Diversity Action Plan, circulated a few days ago by the Provost. It is a strong "call to action", and a valuable reference for individual units as they craft and implement their specific diversity-enhancing programs. A few things occurred to me as I read it.

(1) Mission: in addition to "leadership and excellence", you might want words like service, exploration, creativity.

(2) p.3 University Leadership Priority: Creating a diverse campus community is one of the strategic priorities of ALL the campus, not just the President and Provost. I realize they are the current top level of OSU leadership, but the wording suggests the rest of us are being led to this conclusion rather than embracing it from the outset.

(3) p.3 Commitment to Action: "...they must be rooted in action by ALL OSU stakeholders."

(4) p.4 Innovation: rather than "struggle", which has negative connotations (to me, anyway), why not use "rise to challenges presented by issues of..."?

(5) p.4 GOALS 2 and 3: peer institutions and the best land grant universities are the same thing. How about, "exceeds our peer institutions"?

For your information, I attach a copy of a diversity program in geosciences that was just submitted to NSF from COAS and GEO. It has several of the elements referred to in the draft diversity action plan.

best regards,

Terry,

I enjoyed reading the plan. Great job and I will enthusiastically support it's implementation.

I wish we would remove references to "training" and replace them with "education." First, this is an institution of higher education and it seems in keeping with the purpose of OSU and our stated goals and interests. The second reason is that, in my view, it is entirely possible to "train" someone to use the right words and act in particular ways while at work and yet this will often not carry over into the larger communities within which folks live. On the other hand, if we educate about diversity and inclusion, then it quite often creates a transformation in peoples' consciousnesses and this does, in fact, go with them wherever they go. "Training" is susceptible to critiques of "political correctness" whereas a changed world view is not.