

Focus Group Feedback

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Over the course of 75 days (September 11th –November 16th) a series of meetings and focus group sessions were held on campus for faculty, staff and students. The intent of the meetings was threefold.

1. To facilitate a discussion on campus about the Strategic Inclusion and Diversity Development Initiative.
2. To obtain information from the faculty, staff and students about how to get them involved with and committed to the initiative.
3. To receive feedback from faculty, staff and students about what is important to include in the transition workshops and where to focus the assessment.

A total of 443 people representing all levels within the organization participated in the meetings and focus group sessions. Overall people were engaged and willing to share their thoughts, concerns and beliefs about the Strategic Inclusion and Diversity Development Initiative.

This document reflects the feedback received from the focus group sessions. The first portion of the document is a brief summary of general themes that emerged throughout the focus group sessions. The second half of the document reflects the actual comments and statements made by focus group members. A list of the focus group questions appear at the end of the document.

The highlights of the focus groups sessions are divided into five broad categories: top concerns about the Strategic Inclusion and Diversity Development Initiative process; barriers that prohibit the University community from being more welcoming and inclusive; places where bias exists on campus; how to include people in the process; and, participant's thoughts about attending a 2-day workshop.

Focus Group General Themes

Top Concerns

While some people expressed that the campus is already diverse, many more supported this diversity initiative with guarded optimism. Some were concerned that this was yet another effort to obtain information that would not be used; examples were given of the Charting the Future process. Others advised that the campus climate for supporting diversity needed to be more positive and that they needed to hear from Carter Hall and President Kay Norton to know that she was serious about changing the campus. In terms of trust, people questioned if the University was prepared to deal with the emotions around diversity and social justice and if it was a safe environment for these discussions.

Barriers to Success

Institutional

A main theme related to costs and budgets: determining the existence and prioritization of dollars used to support diversity; lack of dollars for scholarships and financial aid; funds needed for recruiting faculty of color; and departments competing for funds. Needing visible consistent support from the

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administration and their awareness of campus diversity issues was another theme. Others addressed concerns about the recruiting and retention of faculty and students, the need for greater support of the cultural centers, and the need to work with the Greeley community to improve diversity-related behaviors. A few people expressed that they saw no bias on campus.

What is not valued recognized and respected in the University community

Many issues related to improving the campus climate to better support the needs of students of color, students from the GLBT community, international students, non-traditional students, women students, and students with special needs. Gender bias, sexual harassment, age bias, racial name-calling, religious bias, and GLBT people not feeling safe on campus were concerns that were raised. Biased treatment based on status, job level, and educational level was a concern. Faculty and staff expressed feelings of being ignored or their opinions not valued by the administration. Concerns about stress and feeling overworked due to continuous budget cuts were issues that impacted ability to fully serve the students.

How To Include You

A few commented that their departments or organizations already had active diversity initiatives in place. A main theme suggested that the President and administration needed to take a stronger visible stance to demonstrate their beliefs and support of diversity. The need for the President, faculty, and staff to demonstrate their support and firm commitment and to role model expected behaviors was expressed most often. The need for education and training was another theme expressed to insure all on campus understood expectations and their responsibilities to keep the campus safe and harassment-free. Trust issues were raised in terms of wanting to see that the administration was serious about this initiative and that it would not be dropped and that this time things would be different.

Bias on Campus

Similar responses to those mentioned above in the Barriers to Success section were obtained. Actual responses on campus bias are listed and categorized in the second half of the document.

Participation in Session or Workshop

While most were skeptical due to the barriers and biases mentioned, they expressed hopefulness about participating and setting a common positive direction for all. Some were ready to attend now and others commented that it may be difficult to attend 2-days of training and offered solutions to make it happen. These included having a flexible schedule, separating it into modules, offering it at different times of the day, offering it every day of the week, and having food. Support from the President and key leaders were seen as critical to having people attend. Having the President, Provost, and the Deans talk about, support and attend the training was important. Making the content valuable with clear objectives and results was also suggested.

Refer to the remainder of the document for specific comments. This feedback process was in itself a major intervention. It was developed to be used as a baseline or starting point for this Strategic Inclusion and Diversity Development Initiative. It is the basis for use in the transition workshops and the assessment.