UNIVERSITY REPORT ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ETHNIC MINORITY TENURE-TRACK FACULTY

Georgia State University has become a unique institution within the University system with its student population of many cultures and ethnic backgrounds. The 2000 Strategic Plan and the current Action Plan express the University’s commitment to diversity among its faculty. This document, while recognizing that diversity in general is desirable, focuses on one aspect of diversity: recruiting and retaining ethnic minority tenure-track faculty.\[1\] For the purpose of this document, ethnic minorities include African Americans, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, and they may be either citizens or permanent residents\[2\]. The University expects to enhance the quality of its intellectual life and foster a hospitable campus climate for all its members through the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority tenure-track faculty. Ethnic minority faculty may themselves attract greater numbers of students from diverse backgrounds and will enrich the experience of all students by acquainting them with diverse cultures. In addition, such faculty enrich the professional lives of the other ethnic minority faculty here, offering greater opportunities for peer mentoring and strengthening morale by expanding their community.

Providing continuity and defining the institution’s identity, tenure-track faculty are the heart of the academic community. They are expected to keep abreast of their fields through research and publishing; and they provide foundation for the University’s national reputation. It is therefore especially important that ethnic minority faculty who are tenure track join the University community. Full involvement in departmental and college governing structures by such faculty helps to assure that faculty diversity is maintained and that the University is indeed an engaged urban institution.

For many years the University has made special efforts through incentive funds to recruit and retain ethnic minority faculty. The first systematic effort was the “1992 Five-Year Action Plan for the Recruitment and Retention of African-American Faculty.” The reality of a changing urban student population emphasized the necessity for more concerted and far-reaching institutional guidelines. In 1999 the Office of the Provost appointed the “Task Force for the Recruitment and Retention of Underrepresented Faculty.” This document builds upon these earlier experiences.

General Recommendations

All academic units of the University are encouraged to develop their own guidelines for the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority faculty. Departments should maintain good data on their efforts to recruit ethnic minority faculty members, share those data on a regular basis, and use such data in measuring successful achievement of their goals. The University has appointed a Senior Faculty Associate to the Provost to assist individual colleges in developing these guidelines and to work with them in implementing the University Policy. Collegial cooperation is an indispensable element in achieving desired results in both recruitment and retention efforts.
Recruitment efforts not dependent upon University funding should be explored. Doctoral and terminal degree candidates from ethnic minority groups should be identified and pursued. National vita-banks for ethnic minority doctoral candidates in different fields should be consulted. Academic units having similar research interests are encouraged to consider ethnic minority faculty for dual or clustered assignments. Faculty exchange programs with HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) in the metro Atlanta area and beyond may be instituted.

The behavior of majority group faculty members can inadvertently subvert success in hiring ethnic minority faculty members. Such behaviors may include inappropriate comments and interactional clumsiness. Departments may benefit from explicit attention to understanding the nuances of intercultural communication by participating in workshops to develop such training, and are encouraged to contact the Office of Diversity Training and Planning.

Deans, department chairs, and school directors should recognize in determining workloads and compensations that ethnic minority faculty members (because of their cultural experiences and perspectives) often have heavier service demands than do their other colleagues when serving on many college and university committees. The University Policy on Workload establishes relevant guidelines.

Contact between junior and senior ethnic minority faculty members should be encouraged. Such mentoring can and should reach across groups to create a genuinely intercultural campus community. Beyond the programs established by and within the various colleges of the University, it might be helpful for an informal multicultural welcoming and mentoring group to emerge from within the University community as a whole or within each college. Informal contact between and among faculty members from various disciplines and cultural groups could inspire a more positive campus climate.

Voluntary exit interviews, already in place at the University, may provide information relevant to the implementation of this policy. In drawing up guidelines, academic units should consider the value of administering voluntary exit interviews outside academic departments. Data from all exit interviews should be carefully examined to identify issues relevant to the retention of ethnic minority tenure-track faculty.

The “University Policy on Recruitment and Retention of Ethnic Minority Tenure-Track Faculty” shall be discussed throughout the campus community: specifically, by the President, the President’s Advisory Council, the Deans Group, each college’s executive group, the departments of the colleges and schools, the Senate Executive Committee, the Senate Committee on Cultural Diversity, and the Student Government Association. Encouragement of support, participation and collegial ownership should accompany these presentations. All such efforts to increase faculty ethnic diversity enhance and expand the spirit of community within the campus culture.
Action Plan

1. The University should separately tally ethnic minority non-tenure track faculty members from ethnic minority tenure-track faculty.

2. The recruitment process to hire ethnic minority faculty should be as sophisticated in its approach as any other search. It should involve posting advertisements in the usual outlets of the disciplines as well as other professional publications that are likely to be read by ethnic minority scholars. Opportunities to recruit ethnic minority faculty may increase when the area of expertise being sought focuses on the life and culture of people of these minorities. This expertise is valuable because of the breadth and accuracy it offers to intellectual life. However, searches in other content areas should also presume the possibility of success in recruiting ethnic minority faculty and thus should take appropriate steps to promote their inclusion among applicants. Moreover, these searches should be in content areas of strategic importance to the department so that such faculty members are valued for their intellectual expertise and not just for their ethnic diversity. Attention to ethnic diversity in recruitment should be routinely included in departmental searches and not considered an occasional effort.

3. Funding for the Target of Opportunity and the Minority Hiring Incentive programs for the recruitment of ethnic minority tenure-track faculty shall be retained in order to increase faculty diversity in accordance with the University’s 2000 Strategic Plan, and also to follow its Affirmative Action Plan.

4. The Office of the Provost shall create a web page with information relating to issues of diversity, including this University Policy and funding possibilities relating to ethnic minorities and diversity.

5. The University should explore ways of greater collaboration with faculty at the historically black institutions in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

6. The expansion of the pipeline for ethnic minority faculty in higher education is a critical responsibility that has been embraced by Georgia State University in its recruitment and advancement of minority students in advanced graduate programs. The University should continue this successful effort and report on its progress.

7. The three-year evaluations of the President, Provost, Vice Presidents, deans, departmental chairs, and school directors, and the annual performance evaluations of deans, shall include information on their efforts to recruit and retain ethnic minority tenure-track faculty. The tri-annual evaluations, and the annual performance evaluation, of deans are uniform throughout the University. Questions shall be added to the categories of “Goals and Priorities” and “Personnel Management” regarding the dean’s adherence to the University objective of increasing tenure-track faculty ethnic diversity. The evaluations of departmental chairs and school directors vary from college to college. However, all such evaluations shall include questions to evaluate efforts to recruit and retain ethnic minority tenure-track faculty.

8. The Provost shall report annually on the progress by departments and schools in the
development of guidelines for the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority tenure-track faculty and implementation of such guidelines. The Provost shall report this information to the University Senate Committees on Budget, Cultural Diversity, Faculty Affairs, Planning and Development, and Research, as appropriate.
Tenure-track faculty include faculty both before and after they have
secured tenure.

[2] This policy adopts the following definitions of ethnic minorities, derived from the U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Management and Budgets as of 2001 and now used by the University’s Affirmative Action Office. African American: a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. American Indian or Alaskan Native: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. Asian: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Hispanic: a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.