ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

STATUS OF DIVERSITY COUNCIL

AY 2010-2011

Presented at the
709th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
October 13, 2011

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Laurie Anastasia             Philip Kim
Arlene Avakian              Beth Lang
Tobias Baskin               Laura Lovett, Co-Chair
Sergio Breña, Co-Chair      Samantha Lyon
Byron Bullock               Mzamo Mangaliso
Davenal Canagasebey         Ernest May
Mari Castañeda              Alice Nash
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Andrew Dawson               Mathew Ouellett
Lisa Fontes                 Hoang Gia Phan
Li Gu                       Ernest Washington
Lisa Harvey                 Nathaniel Whitmal
Riki Hing                   Tiffany Yee
Ingrid Holm
A. Introduction

The Status of Diversity Council (SODC) is charged as follows:

The Status of Diversity Council shall make recommendations on all matters affecting the status of diverse populations and underrepresented communities on the campus, including such matters as faculty, librarian and staff recruitment, retention, promotion and salaries, the recruitment, admission and retention of undergraduate and graduate minority students, granting of financial aid, and the development of programs to reflect the needs of our diverse community.

The SODC met on the first Monday of every month during the 2010-2011 academic year, for a total of seven meetings (three in Fall 2009 and in four in Spring 2010) with additional subcommittee meetings.

B. Proposed Changes to Tenure Standards

Like other Faculty senate Councils, the Status of Diversity Council was charged by the Provost to “open a discussion” whose aim would be “to learn whether there would be sufficient support among the faculty to consider revisions in the formal criteria for tenure.” The Council worked on this charge throughout the Fall of 2010.

In order to facilitate an open discussion and garner faculty input for our report, we organized an open Faculty Forum on Tenure Standards and Diversity on November 19th, 2010. This meeting was open to all interested faculty who wished to learn and comment on the impact of the proposed changes on faculty diversity at UMass. Approximately 25 faculty members participated in this faculty forum. Their comments and recommendations were incorporated into the Council’s report.

In December, the Council submitted a report detailing our concerns over the impact of the proposed tenure standards on faculty diversity. We opposed the proposed changes because of the many negative consequences we identified for faculty diversity. A copy of this report is attached.

C. Status Report and Summary of Improvements on Possible Diversity Impact from Creation of CHASS

In the Spring, the Provost requested the Council review and comment on the proposed merger of the Colleges of Humanities and Fine Arts and Social and Behavioral Sciences. Council members reviewed the many reports already produced on the impact of the merger, and formulated our own response in terms of impacts on diversity. In the course of this process, the Provost altered his request as he moved to a “Plan B,” which delayed the proposed merger. The council continued its efforts and compiled a report on the diversity impacts of a merger. A copy of this report is attached.

The Council submitted its report in March 2011, and met with John McCarthy in April to discuss our comments and concerns regarding the merger and its consequences.

D. Action Items

Faculty evaluations. Council member Ernest Washington and this Council have continued to requested date on SRTI teaching evaluations from the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment but were refused. Full disclosure is important, as these evaluations are used in tenure and promotion cases.

Respectively submitted by,

Sergio Breña and Laura Lovett, Co-Chairs
Status of Diversity Council
DATE: December 23, 2010

TO: Provost James V. Staros

FROM: Status of Diversity Council
Laura L. Lovett (Co-Chair, History), Sergio Breña (Co-Chair, Civil and Environmental Engineering), Lisa Harvey (Psychology), Hoang Gia Phan (English), Alice Nash (History), Ingrid Holm (ESL), Tobias Baskin (Biology), Mari Casteñeda (Communication), Matthew Ouellett (Center for Teaching), Mzamo Mangaliso (Management), Ernest Washington (TECS), Doris Clemmons (Education), Nathaniel Whitmal (Communications Disorders), Beth Lang (Library), Arlene Avakian (Women’s Studies/ MSP), Byron Bullock (Student Affairs), Ernest May (Faculty Senate), Riki Hing (USA), Nahir Otano-Gracia (Graduate Student), Tiffany Yee (Graduate Student), Li Gu (Graduate Student), Samantha Lyon (Graduate Student), Davenal Canagasebey (Student), Philip Kim (Student)

SUBJECT: Report on Proposal to Change Tenure Standards

In his memorandum to the Chair of the Rules Committee, Provost Staros asked the Faculty Senate to “open a discussion” whose aim would be “to learn whether there would be sufficient support among the faculty to consider revisions in the formal criteria for tenure.” As indicated in the memorandum, the primary revision proposed is that the formal criteria for tenure would “emphasize research” first and foremost, such that the award of tenure at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst would require ‘convincing evidence of, and potential for continuing excellence in research, creative or scholarly activity’; as it does currently at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Provost Staros has asked the Senate to “open a discussion on this matter to learn whether there would be sufficient support among the faculty” for considering such revisions in the formal criteria for tenure.

The Status of Diversity Council (SODC) has considered whether or not the proposed revision of the criteria for tenure would have a major and far-reaching negative impact on tenure-track faculty from under-represented groups. We have determined that the revision will likely have a deleterious impact on the promotion and ultimately the retention of under-represented faculty members at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Such an outcome is undesirable in that it clearly undermines the University’s strong commitment to diversity, a commitment shared by peer public research universities throughout the country. We are not claiming that underrepresented faculty do not conduct excellent research. We are concerned that this change in tenure standards does not adequately recognize the distribution of underrepresented faculty in different research areas and the value of fostering a range of research areas for the University’s mission, the disproportionately high service demands normally placed on underrepresented faculty, and the paucity of fine grained tools and metrics for evaluation of research and teaching that are capable of addressing biases that may disproportionately disadvantage underrepresented faculty.

In addition, the proposed policy appears to have wider reaching implications beyond just those for tenure track faculty. Any negative effects on faculty diversity stemming from a change in the formal criteria for tenure will likely impact campus-wide diversity of students and staff, thereby undermining commitment to diversity campus-wide.
The SODC have proceeded in their deliberations with the understanding, as noted in the memorandum, that “the implementation of any changes that are recommended ... will require negotiation with the MSP.”

**SODC Deliberations**

The SODC has initially considered the potential implications of the proposed tenure revisions on faculty from under-represented groups. It is the view of the SODC that the suggested revisions of the formal criteria for tenure would have negative implications for faculty diversity at the University, for several related reasons. Moreover, while this report will focus on the implications of the proposed revisions for faculty diversity, these implications cannot be wholly separated from the proposed revisions’ negative implications for the broader University faculty, and for the stated mission of the University as a public university.

The SODC discussed several concerns with regard to the proposed revisions of the formal criteria for tenure. Given the widespread potential implications of a change in tenure criteria, the SODC feels that a more in-depth study should be conducted involving the faculty at large. Initial observations by SODC members, however, are summarized below:

1) The language and criteria cited in the memorandum is drawn from the context of the Medical School, whose primary mission, aims, resources, and organization with respect to the balance of expectations concerning research, education, and service differ to a large extent from the stated mission, aims, resources and organization of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. As a comprehensive flagship institution of the state university system, UMass Amherst has expectations of its faculty that are equally high for research as well as for teaching and service.

2) Statistics on faculty diversity at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, should not be considered comparable to statistics on faculty diversity at the Medical School; as their respective missions, aims, and organization with respect to research, education, and service differ. For instance, the faculty/student ratio at the Medical School is vastly different from the same ratio on this campus.

3) An emphasis on “excellence in research” as the primary criterion for tenure logically implies that teaching is of secondary concern; a shift in priority runs counter to the stated mission of the University with respect to diversity.

4) Evaluation and demonstration of “excellence in research” differs greatly among different disciplines, Departments, and fields of research. A uniform criterion for “excellence in research” may ignore these significant differences resulting in negative consequences on faculty diversity and scholarship.

5) There is a lack of clear metrics or rubrics for the evaluation and demonstration of excellence in research. For example, previous questions have been raised about current measures such as the Hirsch Index (especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences). The Hirsch Index works best for article-based fields with high publication rates, such as the sciences. The same metric undervalues research in book-based fields, such as history, with a slower rate of publication for much lengthier products, which are not included in many academic indices such as ISI’s Web of Knowledge database.

6) Research of faculty of diversity or minority status is often evaluated by peers unconcerned with research questions related to issues of diversity. The research topics by minority faculty may be in fields that are not recognized with the same weight as other areas. If these research topics are not as highly valued as other areas of research, they may be dismissed or rejected with negative effects to faculty in diverse groups.
7) The Status of Diversity Council has already begun to examine a preliminary study which suggests that student assessment of teaching by female faculty and ALANA faculty backgrounds may demonstrate serious biases. The preliminary study of SRTI Global Item scores by Ernest Washington and Jennie Traschen indicates that female faculty and faculty of color tend to receive lower scores than white, male faculty on summative questions in larger classes. If the same trend is not present in SRTI more specific items 1-9, then this may represent a bias in the summative items that would need to be taken into consideration in faculty evaluations. Washington and Traschen are working now to obtain data on SRTI items 1-9 to make this comparison and complete this analysis. Regardless of the result of this specific study, unfair evaluations of under-represented faculty, which are made by Personnel Committees that are often unaware of the inherent biases of students, may be compounded further by the proposed change in tenure criteria.

8) Reframing of priorities for tenure will have major impacts on the institutional goal of retention and recruitment of a diverse student and faculty bodies. For example, high demands of minority faculty on advising minority students, constituting service expectations, may cause imbalance in work/life issues, thus creating obstacles in minority faculty retention.

Concluding Remarks
The SODC believes that this should mark the initiation of continued dialogue about already existent faculty excellence in campus and that a careful study of the potential implications of a change in tenure policy should be conducted to avoid undesired consequences. We believe that we should be proud and broadcast widely the great accomplishments in research, teaching, and service of our faculty body.
DATE: March 30, 2011

TO: Provost James V. Staros

FROM: Status of Diversity Council
Laura L. Lovett (Co-Chair, History), Sergio Breña (Co-Chair, Civil and Environmental Engineering), Lisa Harvey (Psychology), Hoang Gia Phan (English), Alice Nash (History), Ingrid Holm (ESL), Tobias Baskin (Biology), Mari Casteñeda (Communication), Matthew Ouellett (Center for Teaching), Mzamo Mangaliso (Management), Ernest Washington (TECS), Doris Clemmons (Education), Nathaniel Whitmal (Communications Disorders), Beth Lang (Library), Arlene Avakian (Women’s Studies/ MSP), Byron Bullock (Student Affairs), Ernest May (Faculty Senate), Riki Hing (USA), Nahir Otano-Gracia (Graduate Student), Tiffany Yee (Graduate Student), Li Gu (Graduate Student), Samantha Lyon (Graduate Student), Davenal Canagasebey (Student), Philip Kim (Student)

SUBJECT: Status Report and Summary of Improvements on Possible Diversity Impact from Creation of CHASS

In response to your call for comments on the possibility of creating a new College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, the Status of Diversity Council of the Faculty Senate would like to offer the following report. Our comments are separated into potential impacts on faculty, students, and staff, as well as some initial general comments.

General Comments:

Since Council members are deeply concerned by the notable lack of faculty support for the original CHASS proposal, we are gratified to see the process of deliberation extended. A great deal of time and attention is clearly needed to address issues such as the following:

First, we remain concerned that the merger is likely to place a major burden on department chairs as they work to reconfigure their departments and departmental requirements to fit into the overriding structure of the new college. This endeavor will certainly leave chairs with far less time to devote to fostering diversity initiatives (e.g., recruiting and retaining junior faculty from diverse backgrounds). This oversight could have a significantly negative impact on faculty diversity and especially the campus climate with regard to diversity.

Second, we recognize that the administrative process of merging these two colleges will require extensive additional service from faculty and staff with the only identified benefit appearing to be the possibility of membership in the American Association of Universities. Before faculty and staff devote a very considerable amount of concerted effort over a period of years to create a new college, we strongly recommend that a clear statement of the benefits and costs of attaining AAU membership be presented to the faculty in writing.

In short, we strongly advocate that the promotion and retention of diversity in a public research and teaching university, such as the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, remain a primary institutional goal throughout the merging process. These objectives represent values that are shared by our peer public research institutions, including the member institutions of the AAU.
Recommendations:

- Policies to ensure diversity of faculty who represent each departmental discipline (in recruitment, hiring and retention) must be established, and a comprehensive diversity plan for the College must be developed.
- A College-wide Director of Diversity Advancement (currently in SBS) should be appointed for the new college, which may help address challenging diversity issues.
- The job description of the new dean should include a strong diversity component - stressing leadership to validate and promote our institutional diversity efforts.
- A suitable budget line for the new college to support new and ongoing diversity efforts is needed.

Faculty

A merged college may negatively impact faculty diversity hiring initiatives. That is, the compilation of collective numbers of diverse faculty for the new college may make the college appear deceptively diverse overall, when in fact, if specific departmental disciplines are scrutinized, some may be fairly homogeneous (i.e., Philosophy or Classics), while others are very diverse (i.e., Women, Gender, And Sexuality Studies). Unless this uneven distribution is recognized and addressed, the resulting insufficient level of accountability could hinder future support to hire under-represented faculty from diverse backgrounds where they are in fact most needed.

The proposed merger is not viewed as welcome change by many faculty. As evidenced by a faculty poll regarding the merger, faculty from diverse backgrounds, who are highly sought after by other institutions, may choose to leave UMass, to the detriment of the diversity of the academic community.

The proposed merger will create a greatly increased demand on faculty for considerable commitments of time to service responsibilities. It is unfortunate that this increased service demand coincides with the Provost’s proposed changes to tenure standards that decrease emphasis on service, in favor of research. Thus, those faculty that are actively involved in making the merger a success put themselves at risk in terms of evaluation for promotion or even merit increases as the University places increasingly more emphasis on research.

A cumbersome, larger, and more intellectually diverse college also raises questions of how research will be supported and evaluated at the College level. That research support and evaluation be considered both well informed and fair is vital in order to keep morale high for the diverse disciplinary faculty within the College, a key factor in successful professional development. We are concerned that a fine-tuned assessment of departmental disciplinary differences may not be readily accomplished by a sole Dean charged with overseeing departments ranging from Art History to Economics.

Staff

Most staff are women, so a major concern is that any reductions or lost positions resulting from the merger will have a disproportionate negative effect on this group. The merger plan should include additional training for staff professional development, as well as additional administrative oversight to insure fair treatment during re-organization.

The college diversity plan should also outline strategies to ensure diversity for staff.

Students

Advising for students in underrepresented groups will be much more difficult. Advising is normally conducted at the department level, so a college-wide diversity center may not be able to identify, target, and advise underrepresented students. Studies show that students of color are negatively affected in greater numbers when advising is conducted randomly, without regard for the special needs of particular cohorts of students. Moreover, centralized advising and student support through a third party advisor may not be sufficiently helpful as students are negotiating the real demands of their departmental disciplines, thereby decreasing efficiency by increasing the demands on all involved. We would strongly recommend further training and support for faculty as primary points of contact for advising of students within their majors.
To the extent that degree and course requirements change in departments in order to align with new standardized College requirements, students may struggle with this transition. We fear that first generation college students may be more likely to get lost in the shuffle, unless substantial resources are put into advising students who will surely need more guidance.