

## **University Council Committee on Diversity and Equity, 2007-2008**

**Chair:** John Jackson

**Staffer:** Brenda Brand

**Members:** Omua Ahonkha, Herman Beavers, Aiasha B. Saalim Graham, Christa Heyward, Lisa Linn De Barona, Michelle Wells Lockett, Derek Mazique, Yvecar Momperousse, Andres Pinto, Kevin Rurak, Jorge Santiago-Aviles, Yolanda Slaughter, Howard Stevenson, and Nancy Tkacs

### *General Committee Charge*

The Committee on Diversity and Equity aids Penn in fostering and taking full advantage of its diversity as well as in strengthening ties across all boundaries to enrich and enliven the campus community. The Committee shall advise the offices of the president, provost, and the executive vice presidents on ways to develop and maintain a supportive atmosphere on campus for the inclusion and appreciation of diversity among all members of the University community. The Committee will review and provide advice regarding the University's equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and policies. The areas in which the Committee shall report to the Council include diversity within the educational and work settings, integration of staff and faculty into the larger campus community, and ways to foster a campus environment that is inclusive and supportive of difference. The Committee also will advise the administration on specific diversity issues that may arise on campus.

### *2007-08 Specific Charges*

1. Examine methods to increase the effectiveness of the University's diversity efforts by compiling and assessing initiatives, offices and other mechanisms currently in place to support the University's diversity goals.
2. Identify means of strengthening the support and mentoring of graduate students from underrepresented minority groups.
3. Advise on the creation of a more robust presentation on diversity and related issues on the University homepage.
4. Advise on engaging alumni in supporting efforts to enhance campus climate and to aid in strengthening diversity initiatives.
5. Continue examination of revisions to the University's Equal Opportunity Policy.
6. Review and discuss the committee's general charge and identify two or three issues that should be given highest priority for the committee's work in AY 2008-09.

The Committee met six times this year to address these specific charges. We also formed subcommittees that convened separately on particular topics.

1. The committee revisited and redrafted (in consultation with Vice President Joann Mitchell) the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy Statement. We produced several iterations of a new draft, paying special attention to the wording of Penn's position on the Department of Defense's policies as they relate to sexual orientation. The committee proffered fairly strong and explicit language in the final version of the proposed document, language condemning the DOD's discriminatory practices. Professor Gladney recommended (in a substantive March response to our draft) that more research must be done to determine the potential legal and financial impact of our proposed revision. We have submitted that final version as a part of this report. However, we recognize that our position is advisory. As such, the committee hopes that the University decides to expeditiously revise the report as it sees fit, formally accepting a new version of the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy based on some of the changes that we have offered.

2. The committee spent a great deal of time trying to grapple with the concerns many students raised about their need for data on the university's overall campus climate, specifically the findings from the COFHE survey. We gathered information about alternative mechanisms for assessing campus climate data such as The Equity Scorecard (ESC), which we spoke with Joann Mitchell about quite extensively. We also had committee members provide us with a detailed analysis of the ESC's strengths and weaknesses. Although the ESC model seems to offer a powerful way to track and assess the relative educational successes of under-represented students, it does not quite capture "climate" in the fullest, most holistic sense that we might demand. The committee believes that accurately assessing our campus climate should be one of Penn's top priorities, which includes extending our commitment to (and utilization of) the COFHE survey with Penn-specific questions and further incentivizing Penn students' participation. The committee is interested in accessing previously collected quantitative data while not relying solely on such surveys. Instead, the committee strongly recommends that the university extend and expand its methodological approach to the systematic assessment of our campus climate (particularly around issues of diversity). We recommend combining the COHFE survey data with a series of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and systematic ethnographic research around these issues. This material—in the form of a final report—could then be made available to the campus community as soon as possible.

3. The committee tried to examine potential barriers to Penn's attempts at recruiting and retaining a diverse and eminent faculty. Of course, the central administration should take the lead role in setting university-wide expectations around such issues, holding deans accountable for operationalizing a sense of urgency in their respective schools around this matter: making sure search committees take diversity seriously, diversifying the committees themselves, and demanding robust methods for circulating announcements that reach under-represented populations. For instance, the university should look at HBCUs, HACUs, and schools that produce Native scholars as spaces providing newly minted PHDs, EdDs, JDs and MDs. Moreover, the university should consider making the recruitment of diverse faculty members a more transparent and acknowledged practice across campus. Sometimes, even when such work is being done, the information does not effectively permeate the entire University community. Faculty, students and staff want to

know what is actually being done, not just the success stories of newly hired minority faculty. Moreover, there is something that can be learned by carefully, discreetly, and respectfully disseminating some of the pertinent information on failed attempts, since such failures may provide valuable knowledge for future successes, especially if more constituencies can weigh-in on (and improve) the merits of the processes and procedures involved. One of the most important things for Penn to focus on, it seems, would be improving its institutionally flexibility when it comes to courting professors who are also considering offers from our peer institutions. That means taking a more pro-active and personal approach to the process, not just letting the system run its course in some more conventional and traditional sense. Indeed, this holds for all hires, not just the candidacies of under-represented scholars. Penn must cultivate a reputation for being both rigorous and intellectually intimate in order to court faculty of color. This means keeping the lines of communication open between the school and the potential hire, even before the “official” offer is signed. Committee members found that some scholars felt as though other Ivy League institutions seemed to display a more conspicuous interest in them throughout the process, calling with updates and just keeping them abreast of progress. Penn’s hiring process can take a long time, and it is important to signal our interest in under-represented scholars (again, all scholars) vying for jobs here (especially those candidates on one of our proverbial short-lists), indicating that we are just as interested and committed as any of our peer institutions. It is important to vigorously and transparently apply the “Target of Opportunity” mechanism without allowing that method to serve as a ghettoized surrogate for academic units actually taking responsibility for finding and hiring qualified faculty of color themselves. We might also examine better ways to bring Penn’s academic units into the “Target of Opportunity” conversation earlier in the process. For instance, if departments have already determined their immediate needs in terms of future hires, the “Target of Opportunity” committee should have that information early on.

In terms of retention issues, Penn should imagine adopting and adapting the successful mentoring programs that the School of Nursing and the School of Dental Medicine have already devised. (This mentoring process should allow for the possibility that faculty might find mentors in other departments or schools. Indeed, they might have more than one mentor, since there are many trajectories along which junior faculty might need assistance and advice.) Clearly, there are two inter-related pieces to the retention puzzle: (i) making sure that junior faculty of color have every opportunity to prepare themselves adequately for the high bar of tenure at Penn (for instance, clearly communicating expectations while concomitantly protecting them from being inundated with university request/responsibilities as a function of their social group’s under-representation on campus) and (ii) finding creative ways to retain promising junior faculty even once peer institutions show serious interest in luring them away. Penn should fund intellectual communities (i.e, faculty reading groups) around thematic issues that can help faculty of color to connect most substantively with colleagues from across campus, cultivating useful interlocutors and scholarly conversations that can improve their research. Penn should supply funding for an ambitious program (to which all junior faculty could apply) that would allow Penn’s junior faculty to workshop book manuscripts or research articles with important senior colleagues in their field over several days, flying faculty to campus and putting them up nearby. Some of these events can be open to the public, and others should be reserved for the participants. In terms of junior faculty applications for such an

opportunity, priority should be given to scholars with a compelling project and a proven commitment to diversity at Penn (i.e., serving on the board of various student groups, mentoring students of color, speaking at “diversity” events on campus, etc.) This kind of program could really enhance Penn’s reputation as an institution that truly nurtures junior faculty, especially junior faculty of color, and in ways that are wired to other campus-wide commitments.

4. In terms of graduate student recruitment and retention, the committee recommends that the University financially and institutionally support faculty-student mentoring relationships that extend far outside the classroom and beyond faculty office hours. There should be more resources available for faculty to send graduate students to conferences, to co-present papers, and to meet with them over meals. We also suggest that the University foster connections between and among campus groups that represent underrepresented students, including funding more staff dedicated to the University’s cultural centers, key nodes for such connections. Penn should also consider setting aside financial support for events that create a safe-haven for under-represented students—for instance LGBT coffee chats and BGAPSA soul food dinners. The Fontaine Fellows program is a marquee achievement here at Penn. It should be something that all prospective graduate students of color find out about BEFORE they make their decision about where to go to graduate school. It is the kind of institutionalized support that can help students to matriculate successfully and expeditiously. Penn should also look to examine the extent to which graduate students of color rely on support staff (especially support staff of color) in lieu of finding enough faculty of color around campus. These kinds of relationships are clearly not replacements for the faculty-student connection, but they are potentially just as valuable in terms of students’ day-to-day survival. The University should think about ways to foster and channel the kinds of protective relationships already being forged between students and staff of color on campus. Moreover, deans from every school should be asked to think holistically about the applications they receive from graduate school candidates. A blanket 1200 or 1300 SAT mandate, for instance, should not preclude the exceptional student of color from an under-represented minority group (or any student, for that matter) who doesn’t perform well on standardized tests. There are faculty members in Penn’s School of Education who specialize in just this topic. They should be asked to help craft a more flexible (yet still rigorous) way to de-fetishize SAT scores as the single most important mechanism for determining the success of prospective graduate students, especially those prospective students from under-represented minority groups. Penn loses out when peer-institutions find suppler ways to combine comprehensive readings of qualitative and quantitative aspects of students’ dossiers.

5. Penn should prioritize the creation of a university webpage devoted to diversity issues. It should be prominently displayed on the homepage and also serve as a kind of clearinghouse for accessing all the programs, policies, and presentations on campus that exemplify Penn’s commitment to diversity. If this works, every unit on campus should make sure that their lectures and initiatives related to diversity get linked to that website. Part of what this should also do, it seems, is cultivate an opening of the channels of communication on campus with respect to issues of diversity. Sometimes, many members of the Penn community do not even know when diversity-related events are taking place. This site can promote the practice of community members actively searching for weekly

events and policy documents related to diversity. At its best, the site can foster a larger sense of trust and transparency with respect to Penn's on-the-ground commitments to diversity.

6. For next year, the committee might try to (i) make sure that a version of the website has been examined and critiqued (in preparation for on-line accessibility by 2009-2010; (ii) begin laying out a series of qualitative methods for assessing Penn's campus climate, methods that might be used in collaboration with the data created by the COFHE survey, in an attempt to explain any potential issues that the numbers portend or miss; and (iii) develop more concrete suggestions for increasing diversity among standing faculty here at Penn.

**University of Pennsylvania**  
**Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy**  
*Draft of the University Council Committee on Diversity and Equity*

The University of Pennsylvania's special character is reflected in the diversity of the Penn community. This diversity is prized at Penn as a central component of its mission and helps create an educational and working environment that best supports the University's commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship. We seek talented faculty, students and staff to constitute a vibrant community that draws on the strength that comes with a substantive institutional investment in diversity along axes of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, veteran status, interests, perspectives, and from all socioeconomic levels.

Penn's robust commitment to diversity is grounded in equal opportunity, non-discrimination, and affirmative action. This policy of equal opportunity, affirmative action, and non-discrimination is fundamental to the University's mission of advancing knowledge, educating leaders for all sectors of society, and public service. As a matter of policy, the University of Pennsylvania prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, national or ethnic origin, citizenship status, age, disability, veteran status, or any other legally protected class.

The University is steadfast in its efforts to eliminate policies, procedures, and practices that unlawfully limit access to admission and employment as well as services, programs, and other opportunities offered to members of our community. Penn is committed to ensuring that its academic, social, recreational programs and services, and opportunities for employment are administered without regard to an individual's protected class status. Present U.S. Department of Defense policy governing the presence of military recruiters on campus and participation in ROTC programs on campus is inconsistent with Penn's nondiscrimination policy. The University encourages the federal government to end its policies, which discriminate based on sexual orientation. Penn will make every effort to offer equivalent financial aid to students who lose ROTC support due to DOD regulations.

Penn also has affirmative action programs to address any underutilization of women, minorities, people with disabilities, and Vietnam Era, special disabled and other eligible veterans. Responsibility for the development of the University's written affirmative action plan rests with the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs.

In collaboration with the Division of Human Resources and the Office of the Provost, the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs oversees the implementation and administration of the University's equal opportunity, affirmative action, and nondiscrimination policies and programs. The University recognizes the right of members of the community to raise questions and pursue complaints of discrimination and adheres to a strict policy that prohibits retaliation for doing so. Questions, complaints of alleged discrimination, or concerns regarding these policies or their implementation may be directed to the Executive Director, Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs, Sansom Place East, Suite 228, 3600 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6106, (215) 898-6993 (Voice) or (215) 898-7803 (TDD).

**University of Pennsylvania**  
**Nondiscrimination Statement**  
**(To be used in University publications)**  
*Draft of the University Council Committee on Diversity and Equity*

The University of Pennsylvania values diversity and seeks talented students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds. The University of Pennsylvania does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or veteran status in the administration of its admissions, financial aid, educational or athletic programs, or other University-administered programs or in its employment practices. The U.S. Department of Defense's Solomon Amendment is inconsistent with Penn's nondiscrimination policy, and the University encourages the federal government to end its policies, which discriminate based on sexual orientation. Questions or complaints regarding this policy should be directed to the Executive Director of the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs, Sansom Place East, 3600 Chestnut Street, Suite 228, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6106; or (215) 898-6993 (Voice) or (215) 898-7803 (TDD).