

University Council Report
Wednesday, May 3, 2006

Update on Diversity Initiatives

Last spring, the Ad Hoc Committee on Safety in a Diverse Environment filed a thorough report on issues of diversity and security in our community. The committee's recommendations focused on three major goals: creating opportunities for candid and consistent communication between the Division of Public Safety (DPS) and the Penn community, particularly the minority community; developing opportunities for community members to establish relationships with officers from DPS; and expanding diversity training and accountability. We have worked to make improvements in all of these areas, as outlined in the Update on Diversity Initiatives that was published in the *Almanac* last month. DPS has collaborated with the Student Leadership Consultation Group—approximately 50 leaders from several student organizations including the Black Graduate and Professional Students Assembly, GAPSA, the United Minorities Council, and the UA—to develop a series of Frequently Asked Questions for the DPS website. A UPPD detective will serve as a liaison between DPS and each of the College House Faculty Masters and Deans, and the College Houses have introduced diversity programs and projects of their own, including “When Words Hurt,” a forum on race and poverty in light of Hurricane Katrina, and the adoption of a village in Ghana.

Beyond acting on the specific recommendations regarding DPS, we have taken additional steps to further the full promise of diversity in our community. Next fall, for example, we will launch workshops for interested faculty on academic searches, enhancing diversity, and the mentoring of junior colleagues. We have tripled the amount of space available to the Cultural Resource Centers at the ARCH, and have committed funding in support of events sponsored by each of the student coalition groups to promote interaction and engagement across diverse audiences. We have also intensified our staff recruiting efforts in the surrounding community. These are just a few highlights from our continued efforts to make Penn's atmosphere more welcoming and more accessible for people of all backgrounds.

Global Task Force Recommendations

Earlier this year, the Task Force on Global Engagement issued a thoughtful series of recommendations. We have taken those suggestions to heart, initiating several new programs, including Penn World Scholars, which will increase aid to students from the developing world, and the Penn Global Initiatives Fund, which will support innovative faculty and student projects that span geographic and disciplinary boundaries while at the same time advancing the University's international profile. In addition, we are reviewing the financial and non-financial barriers to participation in international study.

We are also acting on the recommendation to institute a Global Leader Series, which will be launched in the coming academic year. An ad hoc informal advisory committee has been charged with the task of proposing speakers. Meanwhile, the Distinguished

International Scholars Program will support the participation of leading thinkers and researchers from around the world in our undergraduate and graduate programs. In their time at Penn, these visiting scholars will interact intensively with our students, faculty and staff.

The Task Force did a remarkable job making specific and useful suggestions. The President and I are grateful to them for their efforts and look forward to implementing these projects.

Ideas in Action

The 2006-07 academic year will see the inauguration of a program to provide undergraduates with new research opportunities and the chance to apply classroom learning in real-world contexts. “Ideas in Action” courses will be problem-based, and will foster student research and analysis under the supervision of a Penn faculty member. A leading public official or distinguished policymaker from outside the University will meet with the class at its outset to present students with a real-world problem, returning at the end of the semester for an in-depth briefing on the students’ research findings and recommendations.

The Fels Institute of Government will coordinate the program, organizing the initial logistics for the courses and providing project managers to support the distinguished policymaker, faculty member and students. Fels will publish the students’ final reports and make their findings available to policy makers across the nation and around the world.

We expect to fund 8-10 “Ideas in Action” courses during the 2006-07 academic year.