

In August 2007, SUNY established the Office of Diversity and Educational Equity (ODEE), which I have the privilege of directing. Carlos Medina joined the office as Assistant Provost in September, and Ms. Barbara Hardman assumed the position of Administrative Assistant in December. ODEE was the product of an alliance of individuals in leadership positions who recognized the need to diversify SUNY to prepare a new generation of students who could successfully respond to the demands of a rapidly changing New York economy and society. The Union of University Professionals, especially Bill Scheuerman, legislators, including Assemblymen Peter Rivera and Ron Canastrari, Mr. Rivera's legislative director, Guillermo Martinez, and SUNY Professors Dr. Jose Cruz and Dr. Raul Huerta worked with Chancellor John Ryan to obtain the \$300,000 startup funds to establish the Office of Diversity and Educational Equity.

SUNY officials are aware that in order to effectively address its institutional aspirations for excellence and respond to broader social concerns expressed by diverse constituencies, it has to enhance its record of access, particularly for those sectors of the population that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education. Moreover, SUNY is under increasing pressure to prepare its graduates for success in a state that is more racially, ethnically and culturally varied now than in any previous period in its history. SUNY has an obligation to respond to this critical social need by creating learning environments that educate its students to the realities of a culturally dynamic, demographically changing society that is subjected to a dizzying array of global influences. The Office of Diversity and Educational Equity was established to address these concerns by promoting academic excellence in the context of carefully devised programs to increase the numbers of exceptional faculty and graduate students from underserved communities, to enhance rates of access and success for students from economically disadvantaged and racialized communities, and to promote diversity related research and teaching as important elements of SUNY's academic mission. The integrated initiatives to advance these system-wide diversity objectives proposed by ODEE are novel, if not unique in public higher education.

For SUNY to achieve this goal, ODEE requires the funding to develop and implement a comprehensive diversity initiative. The Governor's office identified ODEE as a major budget action item and approved \$500,000 to support its operations. The Higher Education Committee of the Assembly, chaired by Assemblymember Deborah Glick was instrumental in promoting

ODEE. The one House bill called for \$4.7 million for Faculty Diversity, an additional \$200,000 funding for ODEE and \$1.0 million for an undergraduate student initiative. Unfortunately, the assembly-senate higher education committee failed to provide any funding for the ODEE for the 2008/09 academic year. I am hopeful that ODEE will receive additional funding beyond that provided by the Governor.

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the University Center for Academic and Workforce Development (UCAWD), including its very successful Educational Opportunity Centers, report to the Office of Diversity and Educational Equity. In addition, ODEE is the SUNY System Administration representative to the National Association of Systems Heads/Educational Trust Fund initiative on Access and Success. The initiative is designed to increase the recruitment, retention and graduation rates of students from historically underrepresented groups and economically disadvantaged students in public universities. ODEE also administers four programs to promote diversity system-wide. These programs include the Native American Program, the Trustees Underrepresented Faculty Initiative, the Empire State Diversity Honors Scholarship, and the Graduate Diversity Fellowships.

ODEE has as one of its primary missions to increase access to educational opportunity on a system-wide level and aid in the diversification of SUNY's academic workforce. The relationship between academic excellence and faculty diversity is widely recognized among the nation's great universities. However, SUNY's ability to ascend to a new level of academic excellence is hampered by the lack of diversity in ranks of faculty. An analysis by Office of Institutional Research reveals that SUNY lags behind New York's private universities and national peer public universities in the number of Latino and African American faculty in its full-time tenure ranks. In 2006 Blacks comprised a mere 4 percent of full-time faculty in SUNY's university centers, while Latinos constituted a miniscule 2 percent. The percentage of African American and Latino faculty in the comprehensive colleges was virtually identical. ODEE has devised specific initiatives to supplement the Faculty Diversity Program to redress this weakness in SUNY's faculty profile. For the coming academic year ODEE awarded six Faculty Diversity Program grants. Under this program campuses compete for salary support up to \$40,000 for three years for tenure track faculty appointments that assist in reaching campus diversity objectives. ODEE also provides modest start up support.

Relative to their numbers in the nation's population, African Americans and Latinos are the largest underrepresented groups in higher education. A recent Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation report notes, "doctoral programs have made less progress in diversifying than business, government and other levels of education." Although African Americans and Latinos comprise 32 percent of all U.S. citizens in the age range for Ph.D. candidates, only "7% of the doctorates conferred on U.S. citizens in 2003 went to Latino or African American students." In 2006 Black non-Hispanics comprised 4.9% of the graduate student population while Latino's comprised 3.2% of graduate students at SUNY. Although the SUNY figures appear to be marginally better than the Woodrow Wilson findings, they represent combined doctoral and master's student enrollments. Consequently the percentage of African-American and Latino students enrolled in doctoral programs is below the national figures cited in the report. Without additional state support ODEE will be unable to implement no new initiatives to redress severe under representation in SUNY's graduate student body

With adequate funding SUNY can set a new standard for graduate student inclusion and equity by adopting special recruitment strategies aimed at diminishing the low percentage of doctoral students from historically underrepresented populations. However, such a bold initiative is dependent on state funding. To achieve greater equity in the doctoral student population and to help build a crucially vital pipeline of future faculty for our higher education institutions, SUNY will need to allocate funds to double the number of doctoral students from under represented populations, especially African-Americans and Latinos, by 2013.

The Office of Diversity and Educational Equity is developing and refining system-wide initiatives to support campus efforts to diversify SUNY's academic workforce and to strategically invest resources to promote new levels of academic excellence. ODEE will continue to work closely with SUNY campuses to increase the numbers of faculty and students from underserved groups regardless of gender, sexual orientation or disability status. In conjunction with campus units, ODEE will continue use available funding to help recruit and retain a diversified faculty body of stellar academic quality, and to attract and support training for outstanding graduate students from disenfranchised communities. The Office of Diversity and Educational Equity will partner with all campuses to fortify existing areas of excellence and/or to develop academic initiatives that advance their distinctive mission. It will also assist campus units in creating an academic infrastructure to improve undergraduate success rates

SUNY has a remarkable wealth of experienced professionals who have a genuine commitment to enhancing the diversity and the quality of the educational experience it offers its students. This is a resource that ODEE will mobilize to develop diversity initiatives to elevate SUNY's national reputation. ODEE's relationship with the University Faculty Senate has been particularly valuable in building faculty appreciation for diversity. Senate President Carl Wiezalis has been a steadfast advocate for the Office of Diversity, and has established an advisory committee on diversity that will be of great value to ODEE in developing university wide initiatives. Through the creative marshaling of resources, collaboration with campus units, and strategic investments, ODEE will develop a more focused approach aimed at enhancing diversity and academic excellence. During this period of severe budgetary contraction, groups that have historically been underrepresented in higher education will face even greater obstacles for inclusion into SUNY. This reality should reinforce how critical the Office of Diversity and Educational Equity is to SUNY's mission to serve the residents of our state.