

# **ACTION PLAN FOR DIVERSITY**

## **The Communication Department of Buffalo State College**

(Adopted May 2005)

The Communication Department of Buffalo State College is committed to being a diverse faculty serving a diverse student population with an academic program that fosters an appreciation of diversity, multiculturalism, and a global understanding which reflects the broad panorama of society at large, the communication professions, and the Western New York community.

To this purpose, we identify five goals for the department:

### **Goal 1 – Diversity in Curriculum**

#### Strategy 1.1 – Infused Diversity

Priority Action Step – Curriculum Review

Action Step – Diversity Designation

Action Step – Syllabi Review

#### Strategy 1.2 – Diversity in Elective Courses

Action Step – Area Requirement

#### Strategy 1.3 – Diversity Assessment

Priority Action Step – Knowledge Assessment

#### Strategy 1.4 – Diversity Content in Textbooks

Action Step – Textbook Review

### **Goal 2 – Diversity in Student Population**

#### Strategy 2.1 – Student Diversity

Action Step – Population Monitor

Action Step – Recruiting Plan

Action Step – Student Outreach

#### Strategy 2.2 – Student Support

Action Step – Diversity Awareness

Action Step – Student Research

Action Step – Student Dialogue

Action Step – Retention Plan

Action Step – Student Opportunities

### **Goal 3 – Diversity in Faculty**

#### Strategy 3.1 – Full-Time Faculty

Priority Action Step – Affirmative Solicitation

#### Strategy 3.2 – Part-Time Faculty

Action Step – Affirmative Solicitation

#### Strategy 3.3 – Departmental Visitors

Priority Action Step – Affirmative Solicitation

### **Goal 4 – Advocacy of Diversity**

#### Strategy 4.1 – Diversity Education

Action Step – Website Information

Action Step – Direct Mail

Action Step – American Indian Initiative

#### Strategy 4.2 – Appreciation of Diversity

Action Step – On-Going Resources

Action Step – Annual Report

Action Step – Media Day

#### Strategy 4.3 – Community Involvement

Action Step – Membership

Action Step – Minority Media

### **Goal 5 – Assessment of Action Plan**

#### Strategy 5.1 – Annual Report

Action Plan – Faculty Report

Action Plan – Committee Report

Action Plan – Chair's Report and Evaluation

#### Strategy 5.2 – Student Assessment

Action Step – End-of-Semester Evaluations

### ***Definitions and Assumptions***

- The Communication Department includes under the diversity umbrella issues such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle, religious affiliation, political affiliation, social class, physical ability, nationality and occupation. Associated issues are multiculturalism and globalism.
- We define a culture of diversity as an environment of continuing support and appreciation for the diversity of peoples and cultures and the role of communication within and supporting such an environment.
- We understand that diversity is associated with actions, verbal and nonverbal language, and symbols, as well as with message sources, media venues, and communication styles.
- We recognize that issues of diversity should be measured against various standards and norms: local, regional, national and global; cultural, racial and ethnic; organizational and professional; moral and ethical.
- We see diversity as a benefit to every person associated with our department. An appreciation for diversity not only empowers persons of under-represented populations, it also enriches those within the dominant culture. In particular, every student benefits from an ability to work in a multicultural environment and to communicate with diverse populations. We see other values associated with diversity and multiculturalism as including mutual understanding, self-awareness, respect, tolerance, inclusion and equality.
- We recognize that media and communication have played a role in the experience of various groups and peoples who have been negatively impacted, from stereotyping and disenfranchisement to subjugation and repression.
- The Communication Department has an undergraduate population with the following profile (effective Fall 2004): 509 students; 24% students from under-represented ethnic and racial backgrounds (higher than the general Buffalo State profile); 47-53 male-female ratio (compared to 40:60 college-wide); acceptance rate of 55% for freshmen, 57% for transfer students. Given the realities of Buffalo State College and Western New York, we judge this to be a positive profile of a diverse student population.

### ***Past Achievements and Current Status***

- The Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication is encouraging the department to formalize its commitment to and action plan for diversity.
- Women comprise 23 percent of the full-time active faculty and 33 percent of the full associated faculty. Women comprise 39 percent of the part-time faculty.
- Within the last six years, the Communication Department has had three full-time minority faculty members serving for a total of 12 years and another who resigned soon after being hired.
- The current part-time and adjunct faculty includes 18 percent of men and women from under-represented ethnic/racial populations.
- The current full-time faculty includes two military veterans.
- The department currently offers one course designed as a college-wide Diversity course, COM 333 *Minority Voices in the Media*. Two other elective courses are COM 389 *Intercultural Communication*

and Com 410 *International Communication*. Another course on the books, not currently taught, is COM 313 *African-American Communication*. Additionally, COM 310 *International Communication* focuses on global and multicultural issues associated with communication.

- In 2004, the department began the American Indian Policy and Media Initiative, a grant-funded project focusing on education, research, training and advocacy on issues related to Native American representation in and use of the media.
- Several required departmental courses have significant components dealing with diversity and multicultural issues:
  - COM 100 *Media Literacy*, with components on media representation, stereotypes, advertising images, ethnic media, and racism/sexism in news.
  - COM 205 *Introduction to Oral Communication*, with components on cultural differences and intercultural communication.
  - COM 210 *Introduction to Media Writing*, with a component on language that is inclusive in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, as well as age and physical ability.
  - COM 215 *Introduction to Visual Communication*, with components on visual representations and different visual encoding of stereotypes.
  - COM 450 *Communication and Society*, with components on various cultural and ethnic issues, including the representation of minority people in both news and entertainment media.

## ***Diversity Goal 1 – Diversity in Curriculum***

**The Communication Department will offer a comprehensive curriculum that presents concepts of diversity, both to increase knowledge and understanding among students and to better prepare students for the diverse environment in which they will live and work.**

### ***Strategy 1.1 – Infused Diversity***

**The Communication Department will continue its model of infused diversity, specifically addressing issues of diversity in various relevant places within the curriculum.**

#### *Priority Action Step – Curriculum Review*

Every course proposal/revision will be reviewed and, where appropriate, learning outcomes and content will be modified to support an understanding of diversity with practical implications both for producers and consumers of media messages. Particular attention will be given to course required in the core area and within the various majors.

#### *Action Step – Diversity Designation*

The department will submit courses that primarily offer content and serve learning outcomes that focus on diversity issues. The department's Curriculum Committee will establish guidelines for the department to apply a label of "Diversity-Enhanced Course" to any additional departmental course that substantially offers content and serves learning outcomes that focus on diversity issues.

#### *Action Step – Syllabi Review*

The Curriculum Committee will review every course syllabus at least once every three years to verify that provisions dealing with diversity and multicultural issues outlined in course proposals/revisions are being implemented.

### ***Strategy 1.2 – Diversity in Elective Courses***

**The department will continue to offer elective courses that deal with particular aspects of diversity.**

#### *Action Step – Area Requirement*

As part of its ongoing modification of the curriculum, the department will consider adopting a new multicultural category of required courses. Such a category might include COM 333 *Minority Voices in the Media*, COM 389 *Intercultural Communication*, COM 410 *International Communication*, and COM 313 *African-American Communication*.

### ***Strategy 1.3 – Diversity Assessment***

**The department will include diversity as one of the areas of general student assessment.**

#### *Priority Action Step – Knowledge Assessment*

Items on diversity, global communication and multicultural society will be included on a pre-test/post-test assessment of student knowledge to be administered at least once every two years to both entering students and graduating students.

#### ***1.4 Strategy – Diversity Content in Textbooks***

**The department will use textbooks and other materials that appropriately cover material related to diversity and multiculturalism.**

##### *Action Step – Textbook Review*

At least once every three years, department faculty will report to the chair about textbooks, videos and other instructional materials used in required courses and how these materials handle diversity in subject matter and presentation.

## ***Diversity Goal 2 – Diversity in Student Population***

**The Communication Department will recruit and retain a student population that is diverse in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, and otherwise reflective of the diversity of the Western New York population.**

### ***Strategy 2.1 – Student Diversity***

**The Communication Department will recruit a diverse population of capable students into the department.**

#### *Action Step – Population Monitor*

On an annual basis, the department will monitor and document the gender and racial/ethnic mix of its student population.

#### *Action Step – Recruiting Plan*

The department will address the diversity of its student population in the Action Plan on Enrollment Management.

#### *Action Step – Student Outreach*

The department will coordinate the visits of faculty and students to high schools identified in the recruitment plan, particularly for the purpose of interacting with minority students.

### ***2.2 Strategy – Student Support***

**The department will actively support students who are among under-represented populations.**

#### *Action Step – Diversity Awareness*

The department will actively celebrate the diversity within its student body, helping student understand and appreciate this diversity. Photos and videos of diversity themes will be given more visibility through the website and in department-generated materials.

#### *Action Step – Student Research*

A focus group or survey will be conducted at least once every two years with a representative group/sample of minority students to gather information and opinions about the department's record on diversity issues.

#### *Action Step – Student Dialogue*

The chair or a representative of the department will meet at least once each year with a representative group of minority students to gather information and opinions and to discuss concerns about the department's record on diversity issues.

#### *Action Step – Retention Plan*

The department will address the issue of student retention in the Action Plan for Enrollment Management, specifically monitoring the progress of both students in both majority demographics as well as students in under-represented populations.

#### *Action Step – Student Opportunities*

Through its website and personal contact with students, the department will promote scholarships, internships, professional service prospects, and other educational opportunities of particular interest to students of under-represented populations.

### ***Diversity Goal 3 – Diversity in Faculty***

**The Communication Department will recruit as diverse a faculty as possible, with attention to under-represented populations such as women, ethnic and racial minorities, and persons with handicaps.**

#### ***Strategy 3.1 – Full-Time Faculty***

**The department will recruit members of under-represented populations for its full-time faculty.**

##### *Priority Action Step – Affirmative Solicitation*

The department will continue to follow the college recruitment program of affirmative action in advertising and soliciting applications for faculty positions. This program calls for active solicitation among under-represented populations, for example by advertising in both print and on-line venues of minority media, directed mail to historically black colleges, directed mail to members of minority caucuses within professional organizations, and personal solicitation individually and at professional or academic conferences. The department keeps detailed records to document this affirmative solicitation. Hiring will always be made on the basis of the best available person for the job, with an understanding that the ability and willingness to support the department commitment to diversity and multiculturalism are necessary qualifications, and that a member of an under-represented population may offer certain advantages for the department's overall diversity goals.

#### ***Strategy 3.2 – Part-Time Faculty***

**The department will recruit members of under-represented populations for its part-time faculty.**

##### *Action Step – Affirmative Solicitation*

Faculty members will actively solicit the Western New York professional media community for applications from qualified members of under-represented populations.

#### ***Strategy 3.3 – Departmental Visitors***

**The department will include members of under-represented populations among its invited guests, speakers and presenters.**

##### *Priority Action Step – Affirmative Solicitation*

Every full-time faculty member will be encouraged to invite once a year at least one person who is a member of an under-represented population or who presents a topic associated with diversity, multiculturalism, or global issues.

## ***Diversity Goal 4 – Advocacy of Diversity***

**The Communication Department will advocate for diversity and multiculturalism in and through the media and will advocate for an appreciation of diversity as it relates to both the scholarship and practice of communication.**

### ***Strategy 4.1 – Diversity Education***

**The department will provide resources to alumni and media professions on issues related to diversity within a communication context.**

#### *Action Step – Website Information*

The department website will be used to provide information and relevant links dealing with diversity, multiculturalism, and global communication.

#### *Action Step – Direct Mail*

The department will provide information about diversity and communication to alumni and media professionals.

#### *Action Step – American Indian Initiative*

The department will continue to support for work of its American Indian Policy and Media Initiative, particularly in research and training.

### ***Strategy 4.2 – Appreciation of Diversity***

**The department will foster a culture of diversity among its faculty and students.**

#### *Action Step – On-Going Resources*

The chair will arrange for continuing faculty/staff education on issues of diversity, with at least one annual educational opportunity delivered through such means as workshops, department meetings, videos, and reading resources.

#### *Action Step – Annual Report*

The department will add a section to the annual faculty report for information about diversity components of instruction, scholarship/creative activity, and service.

#### *Action Step – Media Day*

The department will re-establish the practice of an annual Media Day, with the intention of including at least one topic dealing with diversity or multiculturalism or at least one presenter from an under-represented population.

### ***Strategy 4.3 – Community Involvement***

**The department will maintain an involvement in minority/diversity venues both academically and professionally.**

#### *Action Step – Membership*

Department members will continue to participate in minority-focused media organizations, committees, task forces, and similar bodies. This participation will seek to provide both resources for the department and community/professional service from the department.

*Action Step – Minority Media*

The department will establish working relationships with minority media organizations as a means to recruit, retain and resource students from under-representative populations.

## ***Diversity Goal 5 – Assessment of Action Plan***

**The Communication Department will continually monitor and assess its progress on this action plan.**

### ***Strategy 5.1 – Annual Report***

**The department will formally report on progress toward implementation of the action plan.**

#### *Action Step – Faculty Report*

Faculty members will submit information reporting their role in implementing the action plan as individual members of the faculty.

#### *Action Step – Committee Report*

Chairs of department committees will be asked to submit information reporting their committee's role in implementing the action plan.

#### *Action Step – Chair's Report and Evaluation*

The department chair will report to the department on overall progress toward implementing the action plan. As appropriate, s/he will make recommendations or invite faculty discussion on updating the plan. The chair also will report to the dean on overall progress toward implementing the action plan.

### ***Strategy 5.2 – Student Assessment***

**The department will assess the extent to which classroom/lab/studio environments foster the goals of diversity**

#### *Action Step – End-of-Semester Student Evaluations*

The chair will modify and monitor student class evaluations to document student satisfaction on issues of diversity and multiculturalism.