

Staff Diversity Report of the Committee on Staff Diversity 2005

Note: Each Task Force Report is a collection of background information, analyses, and recommendations that are submitted to the Planning Steering Committee and the President. Over the summer, the Steering Committee and the President will review and discuss all 15 sets of recommendations together in the context of the College's available resources.

Purpose of this Initiative:

Background

Middlebury College is committed to promoting and demonstrating the value of diversity throughout the community. Fostering diversity is a critical change process that addresses cultural and systemic issues. Not only do we seek to attract and support the candidacy of job applicants from under-represented groups, but we also need to create the conditions under which they can succeed and flourish once here.

1. Goals of the Initiative pertaining to the Strategic Planning Process

Examine the institution's current state with regard to staff diversity by studying institutional systems, structures, policies, practices and espoused values vs. values-in-action. Recommend improvements in those areas in order to increase the College's ability to attract employees from under-represented groups and provide an environment for them to thrive. Translate findings into recommendations to be integrated into the College's Strategic Plan.

2. Recommendations and College Priorities

Members of the Committee on Staff Diversity facilitated discussions focusing on diversity with eight of the Task Forces. The following is a summary of specific issues we would like the Task Force on Resources and Prioritization to consider in its efforts to prioritize the various recommendations forwarded by the individual task forces. We grouped recurring themes into four groups: the overall College Culture, the Curriculum, Recruiting, and Staff Concerns.

1. Middlebury College Culture:

- Middlebury College harbors a "culture of conformity" reinforced by not tolerating differences of opinion
- The community at large falls victim to the "minority myth" by making assumptions about minorities based on stereotypes
- Middlebury College needs to engage "socio-economic" diversity
- The College should use the commons and its leadership to engage issues of diversity
- First-Year Orientation should include a "diversity" piece
- The College should convey a commitment to diversity immediately after students, staff, and faculty arrive on campus
- The College needs to address issues connected to socio-economic diversity
- The campus community needs to be educated in principles of diversity

2. College Curriculum:

- Developments in the changing American Literature and Civilization Department and the English Department are viewed as a potential of incorporating diversity into the curriculum
- Research suggests that students from under-represented groups are attracted to colleges with Experiential Learning opportunities
- The Poverty Studies program broadens opportunities for students to experience other colleges and work with students from other colleges, thereby increasing their exposure to a more diverse cohort and more socio-economic and ethnic diversity
- The number of paid internships should be increased

3. Recruiting and Retention:

- The College needs to focus more on recruiting faculty and staff of color
- Diversity should be a core recruiting principle for faculty and staff at the College
- The College needs to reassess its financial aid offers and policies in order to attract more students from under-represented groups
- Middlebury College already yields a high number of students of color; it needs to extend the pool of applicants from under-represented groups
- Recruiting efforts need to be coordinated with retention efforts
- The College should raise the percentage of students of color graduating each year to at least 15%

4. Staff Concerns:

- The College needs to address issues connected to the socio-economic diversity of its staff
- Staff need to embrace diversity continually and would profit from models and mechanisms that address the problems staff face when interacting with groups with which they are uncomfortable
- An enhanced awareness of diversity needs to be established at the managerial/supervisory level of staff

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